

## Two Poems · *Gail Shepherd*

### GIRLS AT CONFIRMATION

They are scraps of lace, a dressmaker's ribbon  
unspooled, despoiled. From where the congregation stands  
they're grained with dust and distance. That first communion,  
its discomfiting clichés: demure hands,

the rustle of best dresses, a flurry as angel-moths  
flutter up the aisle toward a myth  
of heavenly incandescence, each pretty mouth  
open for the tang of flesh and blood. As if

suffering could be traded with such innocence!  
Seen from above, through God's fish-eye lens:  
the girls in marriage whites, their parents  
a blur of benevolence under the granite saint's

grey-blue regard, his oriental smile on the verge  
of sensuality. Dome-light rests its lance  
gently on the priest's shoulder. And hands  
press host to tongue, hands urge

them back into the sun again. Already, in a borrowed car,  
and out all afternoon, perhaps on Lovers' Hill,  
they sit remotely, overlooking the stagger  
of houses and spires, feeling dreamy, restless, evil.