

Doors Opening Here, and There · *Marcia Southwick*

A broken rainspout.

The dream about water rising up the stairs.
Mother and I trapped in a small rectangular room.
Her bones turning to plaster
when I touch them.

A melon rotting on the kitchen sill.

Doors opening here and there into rooms
where no one is permitted.

Mother pushing father away
without the use of physical force.
She looks at him as if from a great height,
the way one would look at stones on the ground
from the point of view of a roof.

All of this occurring over cups of coffee.

A few clouds scattered like minor complaints.

Mother's description of my brother's apartment:
no chairs, cardboard nailed over the windows,
and a wife who cries
when he returns from work and watches T.V.
without speaking.

Her possible description of me:
How one morning my son carried handfuls of ashes
out of the dead fire
and rubbed them into my hair as I slept,
stretched out, drunk, on the white couch.

Open windows. The wind disturbing the stillness
of the lamps and portraits.

The feeling of being lost among familiar objects,
of being unrecognized by the striped wallpaper
and dried flowers.

My husband in a closed room listening to Pachelbel.
In tears because his father, now dying,
used to close himself in a room and listen
to Pachelbel.

A crack in the wall that never shows itself.

My husband's father asleep in a chair
in the blue livingroom in California.
The wrong words that seem to seize him:
"How will you get there,
the four-lane hospital?"

The calm white of the almond trees.

The rain speaking in extinct syllables.

Connecticut. What mother said to father
about his change of career:
"I married a doctor, not a sculptor."
Father was measuring the distance
between my hairline and my chin.
For the bust.

What father said to me
on a ferry from Maine to Canada:
"Your mother's friends play golf.
I hate golf."

Noticed the apparent closeness of a couple
walking down the rainy street,
just beyond the neatly trimmed hedges.

Then realized the rain was responsible.

Not their emotions but the rain
causing them to huddle together
beneath the umbrella.

No comfort in knowing the trees have flowered
according to my belief that they would.

A few blackbirds jarring the ear with insults.