

JOSH KALSCHEUR

KATARI

After hours of strict respect
from the man who loves me
for a time each year, I enter
the cookhouse with a mirror
and a shard of louver
to loosen two teeth of a turtleshell comb
from my forehead.

It was a gift to me, the comb.
The skilled threadwork left me
leaning. The respect that ran for me
now runs from me and I lay
down my arms. From a line
by the road a hanging skirt drifts
upward. I was not always loved
so heavily, so accepted
into the rhythm of survival,
so stalled in a bloodline
which bends for no one,
not even the beautiful.

In the right darkness, I go
to the top of the hill
where Americans listen to all
the sounds the ocean
never makes. I want to clean them
from their happiness until the flies
gather where fruit splits
its sweetness. I want my shore
to teach them the smallness
of a flower grove, a shadow
which sways into the water
and lessens.