

## Gambler

mom plays poker  
in old pajamas, pastels  
in her drawer keep them smelling

sweet as brandy stains  
flannel worn transparent  
at the elbows

it's not a question of win or lose  
she's practicing  
smoke rings  
alone, she blows

red chips, blue chips, white chips  
the opponent, a long ash  
fallen in the empty chair beside her  
"stacks up," smoke  
still swelling

like a bruise, mom's yellow  
teeth and the purple  
speckled stains of loneliness dribbling  
down the front of flannel  
worn transparent  
at the elbows.