

## **An Embarrassment of Angels**

That beautiful cursed Garcia-Marquez  
with his old man;  
He set off a  
riot of angels popping  
up all over —  
a regular Pandora's box.  
They're everywhere,  
in our music,  
in our oxygen,  
in the literature of things.  
I can't turn my head  
that I don't notice  
a rustle of wing,  
a muted brush against my skin.

The one that visits  
disturbs my dreams  
with alternating reproaches and endearments.  
I thought it was a "He" angel,  
maybe even the archangel Michael,  
until one midnight the telephone jarred my sleep  
(my hillbilly grandmother  
who never knew better)  
She said to me:

"Peggy Ann, I know life is real  
tough, but things will get better, Honey."

"Thank you, Grandma. I love you."

Like every other morning  
my alarm buzzed me  
to my fuzzy feet.  
(What year was it  
that Grandma died?  
So long, long ago.)

Like every other morning  
I stretched and drank my coffee black  
until my daughter woke and asked:

“Mommy, who were you talking to last night?”

Things did get better.  
I feel that lovely  
damned rustling of wings —  
like soft powder grandma breath  
warm on the side of my face.

## Pseudonym

Open carefully  
 my thin flap of flesh.  
 Peel back the pale membrane.  
 Discover there Sarah P. Bishop,  
 ripening into bright fruit.

Put your hands  
 on the belly of Sarah P. Bishop.  
 Feel her humming and tingling,  
 vibrant with the need  
 to be any woman  
 who, in the name of brazen freedom,  
 or art —

Josephine Baker  
 Isadora Duncan  
 Zelda, Zelda

— throws her ageless hair in the wind,  
 dives bare-assed into a fountain,  
 twists men around her supple body  
 like slinky mink,  
 the thrum of her pulse  
 intense with her own music.

Put your ear to the throat  
 of Sarah P. Bishop.  
 Hold your breath.  
 Listen:

If the humming is *not* audible,  
withdraw your hands,  
one at a time.  
Cover her again  
with the other woman's skin;  
leave her to ripen  
a little while longer.

If the humming *is* audible,  
stand back.

## How French Boys Learn

It's a bilabial process  
that begins with  
the intaking of heat  
through tumescent lips.

Room-temperature wine  
first (In French,  
word-final consonants  
are deleted when  
the following word  
begins with a liquid).

Then that sound,  
only they can make that sound,  
that bestial, grooved, uvular fricative,  
that voiceless, tongue-vowel slide (from a  
forbidden throat aspiration is neither  
absent nor present).

You, Boy,  
feel my hot morphemes  
crawling up your flanks  
(God, I love the French man's argot  
for a woman's breasts,  
don't you?).

We've got to cross the isogloss  
but first  
a bit of braided bread  
with or without  
goat-cheese spread (it's well known that,  
for tight-legged boys from the Seine,  
phonological rules can be either optional  
or obligatory).

It's difficult.

We American women know this  
instinctively; we speak of it  
to one another in buttery collocations.  
But we are SO patient when applying our  
interlingual strategies.

And, when all is said and done,  
through the phenomenon of soft glottals  
and diphthongization,  
the concatenation works;  
French boys learn quite well.