

## WILD ORANGE

JULIA TOMES

In the winter I like to go out in the morning.  
Before the rolling hills and  
gnarled oaks abandon me  
to the windowless white walls.

I sneak behind the great rusted shell  
who had (in his past life) been a bustling green van.  
Then, in the time after, a chicken coop.  
But now only a cheerful monument of bygone times.

I find the orange trees there,  
planted in that wilderness of "the good old days."  
And there I stand, in the quiet.  
And feel the morning.

I feel the burning sun as it wraps around me,  
gentle as kisses on brows.  
To anoint the ridge of the Three-Faced Lady,  
with her golden crown.

I let the dense earthy scent of orange trees embrace me,  
as soft as whispers  
reaching out in languid tendrils  
that coil around my brain.

Among these old friends,  
I linger for just a little while.  
And breathe.  
And talk to God.

Only after I've had my fill  
of the stillness  
do I stretch myself out; extending arm and back,  
To receive the fruit offered by the giving tree.

I sink my thumbnails into the thick skins,  
Not fretting  
about the juice that runs down fingers



or into palms of hands.

Disregarding the delicate  
white membrane separating the meaty sections.  
I close my eyes,  
savoring each savage bite.

After, I wash my hands in the dew of the grass  
and turn my back on those whispering trees.  
The rank of giant guardian cypresses salute me  
as I start toward the sound of the tolling bell.

Later you may see me  
fretting smartly over this and that.  
Smiling sweetly and nodding agreeably,  
Folding hands demurely over crossing legs...

But all the while  
the secrets of the trees still coils around my ears.  
And the sweet acid of the wild orange  
still tingles my lips.