

Late Summer Sonnets

I. Dinner

A baked potato cooling on my plate.
 Outside, cricketsongs and birdsongs running.
 In August it is difficult to eat
 With taste already full of summer's honey.
 I push up from the table towards the screen
 Door and walk through to the green-floored porch
 To wonder what the end of summer means
 When I am still nineteen in a striped shirt.
 Just short of the dining room lamp's soft reach,
 The old black walnut tree ruffles and cracks
 With hanging wet; this evening it will rain
 On the gypsy moths' webbed triangular sacs.
 My mother calls me in for desert: blackberries
 In a white bowl, freshly washed and glistening.

II. Sheets

The clothesline—tied from porch-post to porch-post
 To blunt nail in the brick wall of my house—
 Is punctuated every couple of feet
 By clothespins like primitive wooden beaks
 Of sharp and foreign birds, sequined, extinct.
 When my mother walks her hands along the line,
 Hanging sheets, she bites these pins between her teeth.
 The linens are my sisters', hers, and mine.
 Sometimes she whines that we don't hold our own.
 But housework is her province; we disdain
 Meticulousness, order, gloss and shine.
 If it were up to us, we'd let it go,
 All of it. Weeds would overtake the yard,
 And sheets, draped in the living room to dry.