

CAROL CAVALLARO

To the woman at the window

Are you dead, a ghost in the machine
who turns my blood to the noise of every day?
Do you sit on the bed with the shadow neat under your legs

like a skirt, while you remember Europe as a geranium stuck
in a jar, the smell, the crippled streets,
the head-bent people?

How horribly you let in glaring light
to burn my hand, till it stares out
from a chiaroscuro painting, the thick sun white as a line

in two dimensions, and unbearable.
Mother, electricity
leaks from the calculator as it sits in the drawer;

water drips from the clock;
onions red as hearts
eat a circle.

They're building a highway near our house; they're pounding.
Like the bones of a saint, like a bone beneath the altar,
I float on the river below the road, an arrow, a stick,

an effigy of birds and spirits twisting at last
like the sculpture of a cathedral.
You press against the glass to watch.

And I see them, your window wizens.
They uncurl my hands, working them in sleep;
their yellow powders streak the sheets. One after another

you send them through the door
to play at childhood, force me to recall
likes, dislikes, the patterns numbers take.

Then sometimes you turn your face away, in spite
of history, and go
further back than birth.