

DALENE WORKMAN STULL

By Lamplight

We are two women in a lamplit room.

My mother cleans an antique urn
of ornamental grime-clogged brass.
With skillful fingers,
she peels away the green-gray stain
that blunts the metal's beam.

I sit nearby, tenuously anchored to earth
by linen, hoop and wool.
The pull to death is strong.
Each stitch — precise, definable as steel —
fastens me more firmly here.
I fear to stop.

Although she does not speak,
I read her disapproval — righteous, chaste:
why waste one's time on triviality
when there is useful work to do?

Still, undeterred, I print
the paisley motif on the creamy square
with spare-spun yarn
in muted jewel hues.
The magnet colors grip my soul
and hold me fast.

She cannot know
this is the only way
I've found to stay.