

Kristine Chalifoux

## PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

The world you inherit is not of my making,  
although I can see myself in its creation  
the way prep cooks who chop  
onions and zucchini into perfect spears  
slight and luminous as crescent moons  
must feel when the succulent  
final dish is set before them.  
Tonight as we cooked our supper  
in a kitchen warmed by baking  
I watched as you learned to love  
artichokes, to pare tough outer leaves,  
to add shimmering oil to a water font,  
to scrape the fleshy meat off the leaf's root  
until we uncovered the heart together  
and dipped it, sweet and unhurried into its baptism of butter.  
You held the bowl heaped with spent leaves  
so tightly as if not wanting to let them go  
the way you worry after parting friends,  
each good-bye tear filled and dramatic  
like the time you and Manos parted -  
us in the boat, he on the dock of the island.  
You held your arms out to him  
the whole way home across the lake  
while his voice, given wings by the mirrored stillness of the water  
trailed a melancholy song after -  
as if you both already knew that  
some partings are final, although  
I have not yet taught you that.  
You entered the world alone,  
will venture into it again alone.  
You practice for that solitary entrance now as you sleep.  
The gentle ebb of breath takes you out on the open  
water of dreams, rises like hope  
as I bend to kiss you. I am taken suddenly -  
with how much I want for you.  
The moon trails a silvery  
peel across the floor, a river toward the future

away from me. Your life,  
caught in its gentle current,  
will find a way even as the artichoke we shared  
tonight grew from the heart out.  
What's left in the moon's wake  
as I turn to close the door  
is the intoxicating perfume of childhood:  
the chocolately smell of princesses  
the scent of warm baked bread  
my offering to sustain you, love.