

MARINA SMITS

Hands

I saw you in church on Sunday.
I thought how fine you looked,
with your lovely wife and children,
hands clasped in prayer.

I sat alone in church,
banned from the altar
for forfeit of husband.

when I bend my head
and close my eyes
I am a little girl again,
those fingers poking and prodding
turning my centre
to bruised liver
on a radiator

Smiles of approval follow
as you leave the church,
clasping your daughter's hand.
I am watched warily,
sidestepped by brides
while husbands smirk their appraisal.

I envy you
your wife's tender touch
as you laugh on the sidewalk.
She reaches for your hand
and fingers clasp
in communion.

as I turn away
I feel those fingers
poking and prodding,
your mouth flaccid
as you draw me into your contract,
my signature invisible,
forged by you

You were a mixed-up young man,
my parents conclude.
It was a long time ago,
and besides,
other girls get over it.

My lover greets me at the door,
encircles my body,
crosses my boundaries.
He draws me to the bed,
his fingers caressing,
as my centre turns
to bruised liver
on a radiator

Perpetrator

you are the perpetrator
in the crime against my body,
my little girl body

perp
slurp
burp
you rammed your sperm down my
throat
I gagged in revulsion
spewed you out,
the burning in my throat
spread scar tissue
numbness

pet
you touched me down there
(unspeakable place)
my body sent daggers
shooting through me,
cauterization of sexual response
(perhaps you thought
you were doing me a favour?)

traitor
I trusted you
Judas,
but it is I
swinging in the air,
frozen in mid-air —
you tossed me up
left me suspended
(didn't anyone tell you
not to do that to a baby?)

rat
you gnawed at me
gaping hole,
my lovers search my body,
I am a missing person

perpetrator
you look at me
as though we share a secret
but it is not mine —
does a murder victim
share in the crime? —

perpetrator
perp
pet
traitor

rat
rat
rat

HEATHER PRINCE

Anniversary Request

I really don't want roses this year.
Roses fall and weep red-eyed
And I have to tend to them,
To their twelve disciple-heads
And the longing in their green leaves.
Oh, please
Don't give me roses.
They die so easily in spite of me
Their red pinched faces widen and waste.
Oh, please, roses are meant for some other
place,
For someone who can dismiss roses easily
Tossing them aside when they begin to pout.
My books are speckled with the remnants of
roses.
Oh, please listen,
"There is no room in this house
for even one doubting rose."

Untitled

the bird at its very best
sculpts its breadth
over a man's upper lip
suspends itself between the possibility
of a kiss
and the closing, closing eyes

the feathery breath on my cheek
on my lips a man's lips
his tongue, the bird's rugged warm body
opens, urgent in my mouth

I carry the bird behind my teeth
imperfectly
wear hats with large brims for decoys
touch my feathered breath
with a flurry of fingers. Mindful of my
mouth
the bird your eyes my lips the bird
not created in words: the bird
at its very best