

Island Spring

Philip White

Always she is there on that far island
in my mind, where it is always night,
and the moon tears into a world of leaves,
and is torn. A child, she steps
below such slashing, eyes bright
with fear flashing out to find
a way to move through the wayless
dark, where the moon's tatters lie
strewn across thick, bladed shadow.
Her bare wrists push leaves away
from her face. Skin over long bone,
they are thin as that hungry cry
she has never yet known silent
within her. Nothing can appease it.
Not even the dripping spring she
kneels to, whose water has the taste
and coldness of the water of dream.
Yet she will lean to drink and to fill
the bamboo pole she has hollowed out
to hold this moment of peace back
to the stunted hut where voices
of a woman and a man have struggled
against each other all the night
of her remembering. Always I will see
her so, meager of body and singing
in the knife-ridden dark to still
the thudding of her own heart as she
bears under black, moon-lashing trees
her quivering brimful of light.