

# Pieta

*Nancy Hanks Baird*

Lying on my mother's bed  
listening to tropical rain skitter  
across a mottled screen,  
I hold my daughter, sprawled in sleep,  
head pressed to my heart.  
To the west  
across a shifting silver sheet of water  
the world falls endlessly away.  
The child's leg twitches in a  
white ginger dream,  
my fingers round the curve of her  
almond head.  
According to some unspoken law of  
hearts, the women in this house return love  
only in the measure it is given  
while you  
continents, centuries away  
hold your son like that  
your cheek gray and smooth as stone  
your eyes cracked as crystals.  
He slides from your knees,  
from the cradle of your grief.  
Your right hand claims the broken body,  
gathers him to your ribs,  
your left hand gives him back,  
offers with cupped grace  
your two seamless souls  
soundlessly, immutably  
as marble.