

Lily Foot

Anita Tanner

Did I hold the tiny Chinese shoe
or simply gaze at it
encased in museum glass
in the old mining town
where thoughts escape
down corridors?
My eyes lock upon
skeletal drawings
of a normal foot
beside the irreversible arch
defined as beauty—
minute foot bound
at the pain and price of idea.

It's my mother's foot,
club at birth,
diminished by seven surgeries,
necessitating a smaller shoe,
a shorter, smaller leg,
a limp, poor circulation.
Small price to straighten
what nature forgot—
she can walk,
run with halting gait.
The day my child eyes
notice her difference
stands like a relic
encased in glass.

Too recently, it is Shelly
of fifteen years,
knocked senseless
into the abutment of a bridge.
A year after the impact
my daughter and I
walk into her room,
her hands and feet curled
by an invisible binding
that smothers her voice,
fouls her alignment,
and disguises all she is
except her wide clear eyes.