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Toward the Music

Susan Kelly DeWitt

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Toward the Music

Even in the womb
she played, tapping weightless
iambs against her mother's
insides—such a sorrowful tune,
like those sad, Irish lullabies,
as if she understood
the language of salt,
the rhythmic constrictions
of the woman's body.

And when the man
locked the woman
outside in her nightgown
until the silk chilled
over the body's thin cloth,
the girl rocked under the web
of polished stitches, turning the only poem
she knew, using the pressure
of her tiny knees.

And when the man
split the woman's
lip until it hung like the flap
of a gutted fish, the woman
did not cry out, but the girl's fist
spasmed in the amplified panic
of her mother's beaten heart.

And in the womb
she heard, yes,
her grandfather fiddling,
his strange, angular arms
coaxing the resonant dark.

Susan Kelly DeWitt