

LINDA MARTIN

### The Choice of Listening

My mother is ninety-four and hard of hearing.  
 She says, *I can't hear what you are saying.*  
*I can hear everyone but you.*  
 She puts in her hearing aids  
 but she still wants me to shout.  
 In the past, she would have shouted first,  
 followed by my shouting, then her crying, then my crying.  
 We don't cry together anymore.  
 Sometimes when I visit her in the retirement home,  
 or take her to the drug store for the adult diapers,  
 she cries a little.  
 Long ago I gave up talking with my mother,  
 I held an interior conversation  
 not giving her the choice of listening.  
 There are moments now when I almost speak.  
 My mother sits on the living room couch in her senior's  
 apartment,  
 sometimes I sit in a chair slightly to the side of her,  
 we can see each other's faces,  
 other times I am beside her, holding her hand.  
 I think, *This might be the day when I am able to tell her who I am.*  
 I start a sentence and she will interrupt.  
 It could be as simple as *What?*

*Linda Martin is a researcher, writer, librarian, and documentary filmmaker. The Healthsharing Reader: Women Speak About Health was published by Pandora Press in 1990. Hands on Farms, 2009, a documentary film about ten organic farmers in Ontario won the Green Apple Award at the Los Angeles Green Lifestyles film festival and Behind the Light, 2011, won second prize in the short documentary category at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual ReelHeART International Film Festival in Toronto 2012.*

GIANNA  
 PATRIARCA

### Disorder

how do I speak the words  
 to the woman who  
 looks at my face  
 and sees the angel  
 she is certain I am

what will I gain  
 with my truth

will I live better  
 with myself  
 my freedom  
 if I confuse the love  
 at home in her dry  
 old eyes

will she see less  
 of a woman  
 less of a man  
 less of the child

**nonna**  
 I'm gay  
 do you still love me?

*Gianna Patriarca's poetry and prose appears earlier in this volume.*