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MARGO SWISS

Women Tell

Women tell of their babies that died:
 ones born black as your boot, grey or blue
 ones that lived just a day or two
 ones that slept with death in their cribs
 ones that were spindly and could never suck
 ones that were taken before they wore clothes.

Women tell of the nurseries they made:
 linens and lamps, assorted notions of joy,
 the patient passing of nine months gone
 as on a long trip, heavy with love for the unexpected
 to be finally rejected by somebody special
 who never arrived, a door slammed in the face,
 the place they came to a vacant space,
 a house abandoned and all swept clean
 with only a simple sign on the door,
no body lives here any more.

Margo Swiss's poetry appears earlier in this volume.

ILONA MARTONFI

Father's Wake

"Tomorrow is the funeral," she said.

She talked and talked, and consoled me with her voice.
 Mother talked about her duties to him: how she had filled
 the vials for his injections. Now she didn't have to do it
 anymore. She prepared his Sunday suit, his shirt, his tie,
 and shoes, to take to the Verhoeve Funeral Home.

"Death roamed the house for weeks," my father had said.

Ilona Martonfi's poetry appears earlier in this volume.