

NANCY GOBATTO

Disintegrating Tissues

My pockets are full
of crumpled Kleenex.
DNA residue from tears
and snot-mucus
running then contained
by soft, disintegrating
tissue.

Now she wants my blood
as well. For me to smell of
iodine and ignore the
needle's
prick so that she might
avoid the blood bank by
tightening her hold around
my throat.

She wants to repossess me,
to feel my blood charge
her veins and sooth a heart
ache that began twenty-
eight
years ago when I was born
just nearly three months
early.

Sick from a taste like sugar
and salt, I put down the
receiver
and wonder how she knew
I was talking about her
today,
crying through therapy.

Nancy Gobatto is a Ph.D. candidate in Women's Studies at York University. Her writing has appeared in Zygote, Guidance and Counselling, The Green Tricycle, Taddle Creek, Word: Toronto's Literary Calendar, XX Magazine: Women in Contemporary Arts and Culture, TRANSverse: A Comparative Studies Journal, as well as the anthology Girls Who Bite Back: Witches, Mutants, Slayers and Freaks (Sumach Press 2004).

I have pried free of her
needy fingers, resisted
the lure of her whimpered
sighs, and refused the role
of care-taker despite her
gradual decline-her body's
slow surrender to yet
unidentified ailments.

I have taken blades
to my own flesh just
to see the blood bead in
careful rows, watched it scab
and fall away, wasted. But
to let them draw it in doses
like some magic elixir destined
for reunion with that original
host body makes me
cringe.

I cannot deny her but
don't think I can bear to
see the flush in her cheeks
knowing it is only my bright
red breath that sustains
her fading story.

RENEE NORMAN

Arthritic Dreams I

"you're really limping"
this pronouncement
coming so often
from so many
i've perfected the non-reply

i wonder
why people feel they need to
comment
on your gait
it's not as if
they make remarks
on snotty noses
dandruff
or hair loss

but your walk
is open season
and just when I'm feeling
stronger
more measured
even
able to cope with the pain
someone I barely know
blurts it out
and then i wonder
just how long
i've been fooling myself

Renee Norman, Ph.D, is a poet, writer, and teacher living in Coquitlam, BC. Her poetry appears in her book House of Mirrors, in the anthology The Missing Line, published by Inanna Publications, and in many literary and academic journals across Canada and the U.S.