

## 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.*