4 loads of laundry

hang in the sun
3 generations of women
pin unpin
the nightgowns
to from
the line

First Generation
your lips
at a sycophantic salesclerk
when you buy me a new gown
i notice how your cheeks sink
how you hang the wet clothes upside down

Second Generation
i examine the clothes
to see if they are dry
the skin on my hands is parched
lined with creases
that cross between mothers and children and nightgowns
whose hems gently stir
at the push from a breeze

Third Generation
your gums show a large tear
where 2 permanent teeth rip through
barely do you have the strength
to open a clothespin
and throw the clothes unfolded
like paper dolls into baskets
that once you climbed inside

4 loads of laundry hang in the sun
in the sun

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.