The SP GTF is committed to encouraging the equal and active involvement of women—not as victims of injustice, but as determined agents with a will to make a difference. By encouraging, actively promoting and facilitating the coming together of women from different ethnic groups in the region, the SP GTF aims to remove the cultural barriers that prevent people from talking to each other or interacting across ethnic, religious and/or cultural "borders." This is important not only for the development of a stable and well-functioning democracy, but it is also seen as contributing to the prevention of future conflicts.

At the national meetings in Southern Serbia and Montenegro,. Lokar described how the women in Macedonia, despite difficulties, had managed to agree on certain ideas and common goals. Among them were internally displaced women who not only met with, but also had lunch with women living in the villages they were themselves displaced from. Looking back at the experiences from Federal Yugoslav Republic (FYR) Macedonia, Lokar stated: "This was our greatest victory."

I would like to conclude by describing what stands out to me as one of the most moving moments of the mission to Southern Serbia and Montenegro. The national meeting in Montenegro was held in the council chamber in the coastal town of Bar. Women from different ethnic groups in the region were asked to present their points of view and conclusions to the audience. Among those present was a group of Roma women who had travelled from the capital. When it was the Roma women's turn, their spokeswoman, a woman in her early 40s with little or no education, for the first time in her life mounted the rostrum and addressed the audience. Observing the empowerment that took place as this particular woman spoke to the audience stresses the importance of, and stands out as an excellent illustration of, the overall aim and fundamental philosophy of the initiatives taken by the SP GTF to promote peace in the region.

Lise Bjerkan is a researcher at Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies. She has conducted extensive field and research experience from India and Norway. In India her topics of research were Hinduism, asceticism, old age and death. In Norway her research centred on travellers/Romani people and the handling of a stigmatized ethnic identity. Currently, she is working on issues related to the worst forms of child labour (trafficking in Ukraine and the Balkans); gender and peace-building (in the Balkans); and Roma minorities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

<sup>1</sup>See the Stability Pact Gender Task Force website http://www.stabilitypact.org

<sup>2</sup>The international expert mission in Southern Serbia consisted of three local members (Ms Jelena Panic, local coordinator for the SP GTF; Ms Zorica Mrsevic, Advisor on Gender Issues, OSCE; Ms Jelena Stevanovic, Assistant to the Gender Advisor, OSCE) and five international

members (Ms Sonja Lokar, Chair, SP GTF; Ms Hatidza-Dida Pecenkovic, President of the NGO "Zene Sa Une" in Bihac, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Mr Salih Rasavac, President of the NGO "Corridor," Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Sevim Arbana, President and Chief Executive of the Albanian NGO "Useful to Albanian Women," and myself, Lise Bjerkan, researcher at Fafo AIS. In Montenegro, the Montenegro SP GTF focal point, Ms Branka Vlahovic, and local coordinators replaced the Serbian members of the mission.

## **SHAUNA PAULL**

a woman comes to her limit of love early the weight of dusk and she no longer able

to summon the place
that is tenderness her ample self
grown thin as gauze;
and questions she has followed down road
after tremulous, foot-scathing road
she has followed, believing

a woman

comes to her limit of love, threadbare, she gathers the selvedges in, the lint, gathers the loose

searches the line of her own hands for meaning, when once perhaps a pattern mended there by a lover, perhaps an imprint of days she hoped to find but

now

waiting out the cliff-edged hour having walked with harm having opened its crusted wounds

let their breathing

one leaf turns once

small leaf

arrives soft her way
tender its roots into grief – clear pool clear
her welling chest the known singing
the tenuous
message of leaf netting her bones

message of leaf netting her bones young vine so late spilling the body

Shaunna Paull is a poet, community researcher, and teacher living in Vancouver. Her poetry has been published in Other Voices, Room of One's Own, Prairie Fire and will be anthologized by Ripple Effect Press in the autumn of 2003.