In the Village

Those crones know a thing or two.
They read signs the way
farmers calculate clouds,
sailors decipher sunrise and stars.

Even barren, Tia Juana senses
the neighbor’s child hides sudden breasts,
Pedro follows her home from market....
Just before the birth, she is there.

When my mother lay down for a nap—
she never slept in the afternoon—
and I went to wake her for supper,
Dolores followed me toward the bedroom.

From the far side of the threshold
she knew: La senora esta muerta.
I, facing age, must still
learn
to decipher
tea leaves, new lines on my palm, your eyes.

Elisavietta Ritchie’s recent books include: Elegy for the
Other Woman and Flying Time: Stories and Half-Stories.