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[Touch the mothers you never knew]

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[Touch the mothers you never knew]

Touch the mothers you never knew.
She who did the killing and she who stopped the wars.
She who burned and she who marched.
Starved and fed. Protested and acquiesced
The one-breasted and the sexless have all nursed you.
Now listen to the songs you have inherited.
Each time you close your mouth you have forgotten.

Muscled legs spread. Anchored.
 Bathed in rising light.
Flesh tears for the passage of life.
She comes to us screaming: Pink or brown,
like skin familiar with the heat.
She knows she is the seed within the fruit.
Rough red chases after her, cleansing and staining.

Sometimes the mother circles her with tired arms,
cooling and warming simultaneously.
Other times she feels the drugs still throb
and her chiseled thighs shake. Cold metal
surrounding the bed encloses,
while white coats with degrees explain
her hysteria. They try to quiet the child.
She does not sleep, but pulls at the breast.

—Heather Trabert '97