

## “Peacefully, on the Wings of Forgiveness”

A man takes into his hands  
his wife's injured foot,  
gnarled as gingerroot by years of wearing  
the wrong shoes,  
poor-grade cowhide from Brazil,  
fictive leather's friction of cardboard  
lacking proper arch supports.  
Her foot has sustained incompatible twists and strains,  
the scrimping steps that lead to numbness.  
Her foot drops limp, an appendage  
she drags like a rice sack, unable to keep  
up with where her mind wants to go.  
Yesterday he would have scolded her  
for walking around town without feeling  
the pus boiling yellow under the toe.  
Iodine rusts a square of cotton.  
The man prepares a swab to muffle the infection.  
She waits to dodge  
the arrows of accusation.  
How is it possible  
you couldn't feel anything?  
But today's forgiveness plucks the sting  
out of the man's heart,  
as if it were a splinter, a thorn, or a glass shard  
whose removal allows a tiny bloom  
to fill the puncture.  
Forgiveness softens his face  
into the one he carried to the woman  
across the years  
unruffled by the wind of worry,  
when there was no history between them to erase.  
The man who once crossed the dance floor of the gymnasium,  
polished as a mirror's lake,  
takes her foot as tenderly as he once took her hand.  
And in taking it, he lifts himself into motion.  
He remembers the pleasure of her lightness-  
shining across the water-  
the beautiful girl who ate nothing for a week  
in order to buy some shoes.