

What The Womb Couldn't Shape

Ella G. Bundy

I was not born to be restricted to the form
of your shame, the shape of your resentment.
I was not born to be a voice in your confessional,
bemoaning the passion you call sin.

I am not dust or clay to be molded
by your discomfort and embarrassment.
I am not Adam's spare rib remade in your image
or a breath borrowed to keep you alive.

I can grieve the distance that grows in your eyes,
the road of judgment between us.
I can be devastated by this narrow gate –
but I am not responsible.

I am not Veronica's sacred veil,
lifted to wipe the blood and sweat from your skin.
I am not the Eucharist for you to swallow,
teeth red as you plead for my salvation.

Still, in spite of all these boundaries,
the water of the womb drowns me.
Lulls and laps and pulls me under
like a baptism taken too far.

It soaks my skin soft until it flays open
like that of the great St. Bartholomew,
my sternum torn free to become the instrument
on which you play your sorrow.

Yet even bound in your lament,
I forge my freedom.
I am not clay, nor dust shaped
into the shell of man.

I am simply the fire they threw the saints in,
love burning through holy water
in the womb of my
Christening.