

2007

Wolf Heart

Karon Luddy

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Wolf Heart



DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my first muse and only daughter, Charlotte Reeves Bowman; to Cathy Smith Bowers for her profound gifts as a poet, teacher, and friend; and to Wayne Chapman for his unwavering support of my work.

Wolf Heart

Poems by Karon Luddy

“You try to worship God by performing the singularly courageous and impossible favor of knowing yourself.” —Denis Johnson



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Table of Contents

Foreword vi

Part One

- My god is not toothless 2
Birthright 3
Tomorrow is a time bomb 4
Moonflowers 5
The faux me 6

Part Two

- Point of Departure 8
dirty little face 9
Where Zinnias Used to Grow 10
First Time I Saw Ocean 11
First Grade 12
Ode to an Outcast 13
Sandra 14
Joy Ride 15
What I Learned in Fifth Grade 16
Sunday Matinee, Charlotte, NC 17
What I Learned in Sixth Grade 18
Grandmothers I Never Had 19
Final Ache Regarding Her 20

Part Three

- Family Reunion 22
Silhouettes on a Tent 23
Watermelon Dreams 24
Spelling Bee, 1967 25
What They Didn't Cure 27
Have Mercy 28
March 21, 2000 29
Morning After His Funeral 30
Via Negativa 31
Recurring Dream of Daddy 32

Part Four

- April Again 34
As Dreams Usually Go 35
First Born 36
Old Girl 37

About the Author 38

Foreword

Half a dozen years ago, I accepted a short story about a precocious little girl who is named Spelling Champion of South Carolina by the Giver of Words. Her “winning tears ... tasted good,” the story concludes. “Like blood.” The enigmatic rightness of the word “blood” was amazing, like the word “good.” And there were many instances like that in “Here’s To You, Mrs. Robinson,” which we published in *The South Carolina Review’s* spring 2002 number. Two more stories followed: “Ticket to Ride” in fall 2003 and “Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah” in fall 2005. We watched Karlene Bridges grow to young womanhood as times changed. In the end, her peculiar mind and irrepressible spirit cast free of home without quite making a poet from her scrupulous spelling. Naturally, by then her calling seemed to be writing, as the reader understood before the character did.

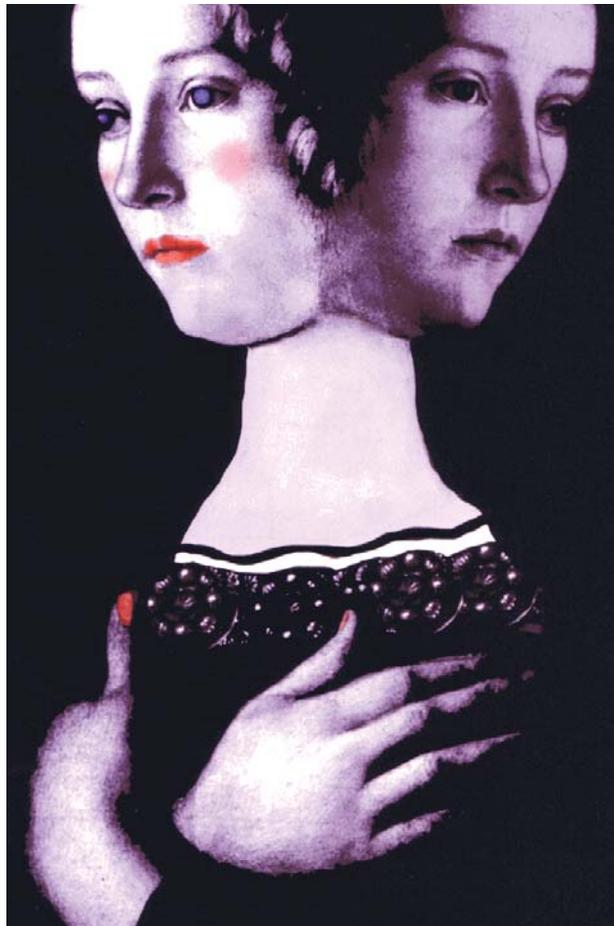
Some of the poems in this book are reminiscent of those stories—for example, “Sandra, 1962,” “Joy Ride,” and “Spelling Bee, 1967.” However, as editor, I know the arrangement better than the history. The persona’s “wolf heart throb[s] with joy” in “Joy Ride,” and she is ripped and torn by a she-god in “My god is not toothless.” She has family, especially in Parts Two and Three, but no name. She is an invention, of course, as we all are—a creature of the imagination as well as the real. Therefore, we must puzzle out in these poems her origin and nature, as paradoxical as that nature often seems. The process is dialectical as suggested by the poem “the faux me” and the bifurcated figures that introduce all sections of the book. (The poet is also the artist.)

Karon Luddy is an exciting talent, the product of a vivid, conflicted experience of Upstate South Carolina by a quick, rebellious temperament. In this respect, these free-verse poems are highly original as a body yet not without precedent in American literature. For example, there is Stephen Crane’s rebellion against the Methodist religion of his mother in *The Black Riders and Other Lines*, a savagely compressed Whitman or extenuated Dickinson. The pleasure of Luddy’s “Family Reunion” derives from combining “Mama’s closing statement to God,” “big-hearted heathen” Aunt Margaret’s “chocolate silk pie,” and “my father’s dented flask.” In another poem, *delirium tremens* is pronounced a symptom of the father’s attempted escape from hospital “Naked as Adam.” But when discharged, his eyes shine “like black marbles he’d won from the Devil.” Rebellion and atonement are reconciled in an elegy in which the same man, aged seventy-five but like a boy, “stomped / into Dead Mama Heaven / proud as a convert”; but, in “Morning After His Funeral,” the poet effects her own conversion of him, producing some of the collection’s most compelling lyrics: “... I am comforted by / vowels and consonants / as they spiral around me / like holy ghosts in a double helix. // Despite their fury, / I clutch them—one by one— / and try to turn / my father into words.”

In short, I am honored that Karon Luddy has asked me to introduce you to her first book of poetry and happy to add this extraordinary work to our poetry series.

Wayne K. Chapman

PART ONE



MY GOD IS NOT TOOTHLESS

She rips and tears my flesh
punctured my hymen
with her eye, a divine laser.

She makes fish dance on their tails
children walk on their hands
mold grow on uneaten bread.

She pours alcohol over open wounds
nurses criminals and other insomniacs
tucks virgins into their creamy dreamy beds.

She bids iron to rust,
jokesters to make jokes,
morticians to do their duty.

Some grapes she turns into raisins,
some apes into homo sapiens
who suck at Life's Big Tit

until Death hauls them away
time after time—
after time—

but for those adamant Few who insist on
meeting their Sweet Lord—well, well, well—
she lets them gnaw that gnarly cross forever.

BIRTHRIGHT

Little darling,
you've forgotten it,
haven't you?

Well—it's high time you remember
what happened a few days
before you were born,

before you left your mama's womb,
before you set out to make your
mark in this wild wild world.

It's priceless, you know,
this autograph God signed on your soul.
Close your eyes tight.

See it? No?
Look again.

Ω

Yeah, that's right—
Omega.
Admire the hell out of it.

Can you guess what it means?

Guess again.

TOMORROW IS A TIME BOMB

that never explodes
but Lord, oh Lord,
I hear it beating
like a tight African drum,
I hear it roaring like the Nile—
I smell the clean sweet camphor of its wisdom.

All around me,
I observe bird eggs, rose buds
and despondent caterpillars
and wonder if they know about
all that breaking and blossoming
and dying they'll be obliged to do.

I breathe in the voluptuous silence
and remember that tomorrow is heading
toward me like an awesome furling wave;
I can walk fully clothed into its surf
and dig my heels into the watery sand

or I can dive in fully naked
feel its royal green power
washing over me—and then
stand up under that unctuous sun
with no qualms whatsoever.

MOONFLOWERS

As day melts into evening,
red clover dozes in delicious silence
while my lazy eyes watch
Moon climb Night's ladder.

My nipples feel like stars,
my thighs like clouds
my womb—a brand new woolly cave
where God can finally hide.

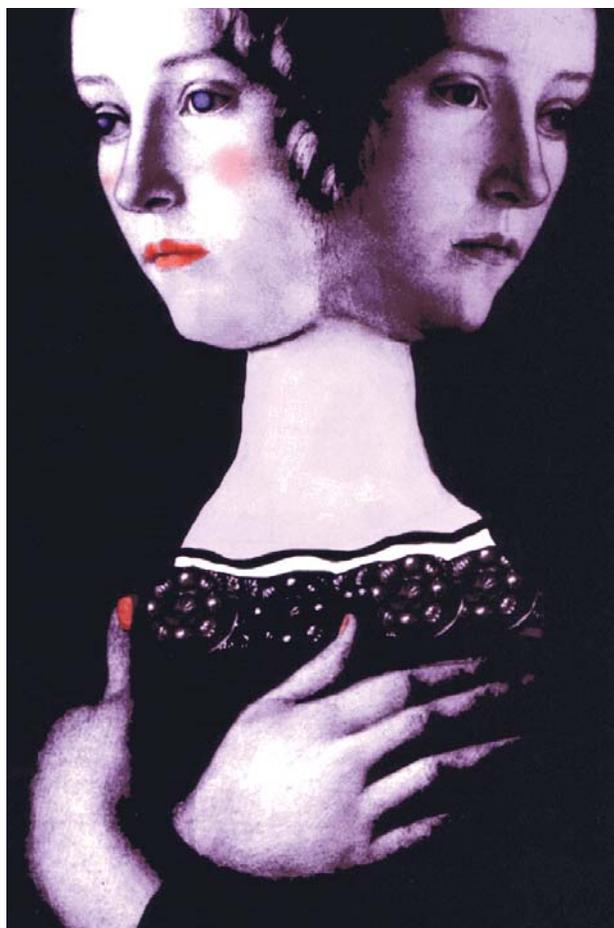
THE FAUX ME

feigns superiority
barking like the bitch she isn't
as she envies
the shadow the real me casts;

she nibbles at Love
as if it were a stale appetizer
then whines and gripes about
tomorrow—authenticity—responsibility—

while I
sit back,
filing my fingernails,
whistling Dixie.

PART TWO



POINT OF DEPARTURE

On a winter evening
like no other
I splattered
into a family—
into a precious
world full of riddles
that even God refused to solve.

Seven pounds
of new flesh
bequeathed by
heaven
to earth
to a mother prouder than sane
to a father thirstier than most.

Was my father
drunk that night?
Was he jealous—
startled by his wife's ability
to take a microscopic piece of him
to create something holy
in her untouchable womb?

What did she think?
*Now I am the mother of four,
Hallelujah, praise God!*
or
*Please God,
help me with this one—
her heart weighs too much.*

DIRTY LITTLE FACE

My brown sweaty legs
run up and down rows
of tomatoes and corn
stirring up red dust

I shout and skip
like a heathen
or so my mama says
with a gentle smile

that means come here child
her large rough hand
pulls handkerchief from pocket
her mouth spits on it

then rubs the
barely wet cloth
across my dirty little face
first the right cheek—then the left

Lift your chin high, she says
and wipes the tiny black beads
from the sweaty creases of my neck
then turns the handkerchief over

spits on the clean side
lifts my bangs and
polishes my brow
like a precious stone

WHERE ZINNIAS USED TO GROW

One fiercely cold morning,
I decided to be cremated when I died
so that my ashes could be strewn
to fertilize Earth's memory
of how Mama took a maple twig
used it as a drill, twisting and turning it
into the stubborn red clay,
dropping a seed into the hole,
then covering it up and pouring water
from a rusty bucket all around it.

And that was that.
She forgot about them.
But a month later, like green magicians
the sturdy plants pulled flowers out of nowhere
yellow, pink, white, red, orange, gold, and violet;
for weeks, I watched those
untended blossoms hold on tight,
soaking up every drop of rain
and every ray of sun
honored to be in her garden.

She never cut them
always left them
outside
for God
to easily see if
He so desired,
but I longed to
bring them indoors
where God knows
we needed something beautiful.

FIRST TIME I SAW OCEAN

Six years old
with my two fattest cousins
crammed into the back seat
of a black Thunderbird
driven like a hearse to a funeral
by my alcoholic uncle,
I sat in wondrous stupor
trying to imagine a body of water
wider than the Catawba
fuller than Aunt Sadie's pond.

The night before I couldn't sleep.
My curiosity crawled like a crab into
my dreaming place and pestered my imagination
to flash pictures onto the tiny screen of my mind,
of what an ocean might look like, but defiant—
my imagination
only let me
see the usual
kind of water
suffocated by land.

Late that afternoon, my heels
dug deep in the glittering sand,
I gazed at that Eternity of Water
while something named Undertow
grasped my ankles as the white lacy
fingers of a giant
turquoise wave
slapped me
plumb
silly.

FIRST GRADE

In a room
that smelled
of pencil shavings and vomit
I met twenty-six lifelong friends—
letters that were sometimes
big and sometimes small
according to where they
found themselves
in a sentence or word

Miss Graham, an up-to-date old maid
who smelled like pickles,
dredged my imagination
for interest in her subject
which was Dick and Jane and Spot
leading their quite boring lives
forbidden to do anything
that required more than six letters
just so I could learn to read

The words so easy to recognize
I was embarrassed
at my cheap victory —
amazed at how
they settled like orphans
into my fat brain
as if they'd found a
good home without
even trying

I loved the way it smelled
when I rubbed
the pink end
of my big fat pencil
across cheap lined paper
exterminating mistakes easily—
brushing them onto
the floor as if
they never occurred

ODE TO AN OUTCAST

Created by the same god
as the rest of us
you surely were,
but with naughty third-grade eyes

we noticed only your grimy skin,
your cheap dirty clothes
your shoes two sizes too large,
plus you smelled like blazing garbage.

Your eyes reflected the same disgust
you'd seen all your life
from people who claimed to follow Jesus
but of course they lied.

I marveled at the way you tossed your stringy hair
looked defiantly into your tormentor's eyes when they touched
you with one finger, then squealed in terror as they chased after a classmate
to infect with your germy disease.

When you weren't looking,
I used to examine every visible inch of you
trying to understand what made the world
hate you so and not me,

because I was a poor girl too, cleaner, prettier, smarter
by the world's stinking rules, but like you,
my fingernails were bitten to the quick
though for different reasons.

I always wondered what your mother was like,
or whether you had one—someone who held
a vision of you as a good intelligent girl
like my mama did.

Even to this day, it kills me when I remember
how that old bitch Miss Haile
covered her mouth with a handkerchief when you came near
and shooed you away as if you were a fly.

SANDRA, 1962

Your tiny waist,
blue satin dress, strapless
your bright red hair
curled perfectly
the perfume
Evening in Paris,
way too alluring for a dance
held in a dusty high school gym.

Oblivious to anything
not truly beautiful
you stepped through
our tattered screen door
into the arms of a mama's boy
who welcomed you
into his white Chevy
like a proud warden greeting an innocent prisoner

After you drove away,
I hunkered down in
the empty cave of your big-sisterness
and wept like an abandoned lover
even now, after all these light years,
my heart still
aches
for you.

JOY RIDE

One jaded June afternoon when I was eleven
I rounded up a few neighborhood kids like forlorn pets
and gave myself a license to drive.

Barely able to see over the steering wheel
I cranked up my brother's
black and white '55 Chevy

shifted from Park into Reverse
and backed out of that dusty driveway
while silly little voices squealed in the back seat.

My wolf heart throbbed with joy
as I pushed the gear stick into Drive
and my bare foot pressed the accelerator;

The car surged forward like a great ornery grasshopper
and my dumb cargo started crying
but I paid them no mind.

I steered the Chevy down Highway 200,
turned up the volume on the radio
and sang along with the long-haired boys from Liverpool:

*She's got a ticket to ride, she's got a ticket to ride,
she's gotta ticket to r-i-ide,
but she don't care.*

WHAT I LEARNED IN FIFTH GRADE

Larry H.
who's certainly a
Mensa member
these days
if he's still alive
defecated in his pants
bit his nails
suffered from the
heartbreak of psoriasis
even then

Jimmy G.
who would now be diagnosed
with Tourette's
a syndrome that
provoked his eyes to
twitch like shutters in a cheap camera
while he caught flies and stashed them
in his plastic pencil pouch
then ate them when he thought
no one was looking

Mrs. Lyles, a tall supple teacher
gave me my first B
and once after I
talked out of turn
demanded I
give her my hand
so that she could
whack it three times
with a long ruler
which she did
making me hate her *kind* forever
made me realize the most
dangerous mammals
are those with vowels

SUNDAY MATINEE, CHARLOTTE, NC. 1966

Ticket-stub in pocket
I float up
the winding red staircase
of the Carolina theater
mesmerized by the crystal tears of chandeliers
my child's hand caressing the mahogany banister

As I sit beside my sixth grade teacher
who drove her shiny black Country Squire
forty miles to get us here,
red velvet curtains magically
pull themselves into corners
revealing a giant screen

When Julie Andrews
climbs the mountain
flings her arms wide
spins round and round
lifting her voice to God
I swear I almost wet my pants

Joy floods me
washes clean
every molecule
makes me feel like
a song you can hear
for a thousand years

WHAT I LEARNED IN SIXTH GRADE
FOR PERRY GARDNER

I was eleven when I met her
a woman thoroughly
convinced
life was never
to be taken seriously.

Her smile wider
than the chubby feet
she flaunted in expensive
black patent leather thongs,
her toenails painted cherry red.

The dimple on her right cheek
so deep I wanted to
crawl into it —
live there forever
closer to her laughter.

Her huge calves
like swollen turnips
strutted between rows of desks
straight into our hearts bringing summer with her
no matter the weather outside.

She knew first-hand about haves and have nots:
her clean educated husband
Plant Manager of the cotton mill that
daily took the laughter of our parents
and wove it into cheap cotton sheets.

Words tumbled from her like noisy clowns:
Bless your little pointed heads
Look what the coyote drug in
Ain't worth a nickel's worth of jelly beans:
sentences as crazily lovely as she,

a woman more contagious than death.

THE GRANDMOTHERS I NEVER HAD

More than anything else
when I was a little girl
I wanted to be a grandmother
when I grew up, but I didn't
want to be a mother, ever—
so there you go
my logic faulty
as a drunken sailor.

I had no grandmother, so I imagined one,
who spoke to me in parables,
caressed my face with both hands,
and told me I could become a cowgirl,
actress, surgeon, preacher, or president.
The grandmothers I never had died before I was born.
One while playing the piano in church.
The other's breast gobbled up by cancer.

Oh, I had someone they called my grandmother
but not a speck of ancestor in her!
I never figured out where Granddaddy
found his second wife—she griped and moped
as if designated by God to do so,
but she loved my grandpa,
who was as easy to love
as a spotted puppy.

But she never squirmed
her way into my half-broken heart
where Eula Mae
and Lula Ella lived,
the grandmothers I never had,
who knew without a doubt
that they at least
were loved.

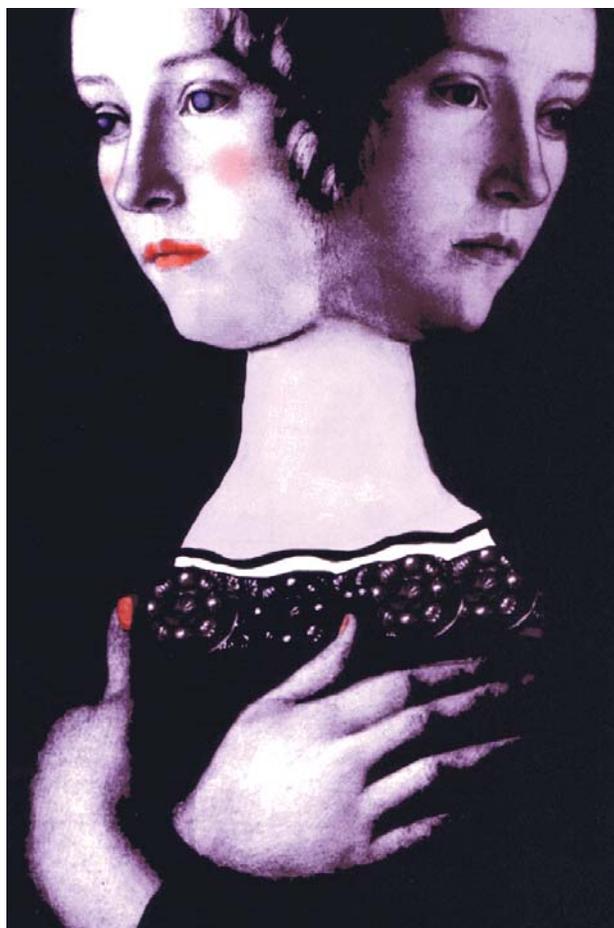
FINAL ACHE REGARDING HER

My sudsy head is bowed
in the kitchen sink
her Christian hands
dig into my scalp
as she washes my hair
on Saturday afternoon
the sun sneaking
through the window
onto blemished linoleum
the smell of cheap shampoo
and fried bologna sandwiches
mingle with her mothery smell

Like me, she's dreaming about tomorrow
the sweetest day of the year
she's thinking about
how finely she'll grate
the sweet white meat
of the coconut
to sprinkle on top of
the cake she'll bake
this afternoon
to celebrate the
resurrection
of her sweet aching Jesus

I think of chocolate bunnies
covered in lavender foil
how I'll pick out
the black jelly beans for her
keeping all other colors for myself

PART THREE



FAMILY REUNION

Brown needles tickle my bare feet
as I run with wild cousins
through a forest of pines casting
its green spell over the feast laid
out on red plastic tablecloths:
Aunt Mae's fried chicken
Uncle Marvin's fresh corn
ham covered in brown sugared pineapples
biscuits like tender golden coins
Mama's deviled eggs hiding under Veil of Paprika.

Waiting for the blessing to end,
I sit under a mimosa
and remove a sand spur
from the leathery soles of my feet.
When I glance at the table,
Aunt Margaret winks at me,
like a big-hearted heathen,
then removes the cover from
her famous chocolate silk pie
and crooks her finger for me to come.

*We take this food for the nourishment
of our bodies so that we may be
better servants of thine, oh lord. Amen.*
Hallelujah!
I rejoice when I hear
Mama's closing statement to God.
I run to my aunt,
who kisses my cheek,
then lays a delicious brown piece of pie
on my blue paper plate.

I sit down
on a splintery bench
eat the yearned-for-all-year-dessert
one tiny bite at a time.
I stare at the faces of my kin
see the pride of mothers
the gluttony of uncles
the sun glinting
off my father's dented flask.

SILHOUETTES ON A TENT

Dark waters of the Catawba

gnaw
red clay banks
into mud
as I lie quietly
with two sleeping brothers
their little bellies full of fish,

Ten o'clock, the moon

haughty
experienced
casts her
light on our
father's tent
thirty child's paces away.

My seven year old eyes

see two silhouettes on the tent
my seven year old ears hear
the giggle of a woman
recognize the muffled voice of my father
my seven year old heart
thumpety-thump-thumps.

WATERMELON DREAMS

The most perfect thing
I know grows
in fields
loamy
fertile

Succulent
red flesh
hiding inside
striped green rinds

My father lifts
its red meat
to his parched lips
pink juice slides down his chin
dribbling pink rose buds onto his white shirt

SPELLING BEE, 1967

I sit in the back seat of
our 1957 baby blue Pontiac
on the way to the SC state spelling bee
one hundred miles away.

You smoke a Camel with one hand
and steer the car with the other.
You look like a movie star
Mama, your virgin queen.

I feel like we're in a Norman Rockwell painting
until a little brown bag rolls from under your seat
and a bottle slides out, its seal unbroken,
but my foot pushes it back where it belongs— out of my sight.

I have enough of my own crap to worry about
for my vocabulary is rich with words
I have never heard
and I am afraid

I will not recognize them
when they are spoken,
that some of the letters might be silent
like impugn with

that stupid silent g
that makes the u say its name.
I can't figure it out, the rhyme of it all,
the way letters line up

to form words that terrify
those of us called upon to spell them
in front of crowds
of those less skilled.

At night, you and mama stay in the hotel,
while I cross the street to Sears to the bicycle department
and yank the steadfast plastic streamers
that hang from their handlebars.

Restless, I step outside
into the frigid January night
and spot a marquee
that spells out The G-R-A-D-U-A-T-E.

The poster shows a woman sitting
on the edge of the bed, putting on her stockings
while a young man stands in the
background with S-E-X in his eyes.

I rush back to the room
and find you and mama lying on the bed
watching Red Skelton on the black and white TV.
I elaborate about how that excellent Disney movie will calm my nerves.

Your breath smells like Southern Comfort as you
hand me five dollars and tell me to be careful
as I skip from the room—
much obliged.

I sit in the dark theater with three other loners.
Every single frame of the movie captivates me.
I feel alone and out of place like Benjamin,
floating by myself in the family pool.

My tongue is titillated by Mrs. Robinson's cigarette.
My legs feel sexy in her stockings.
My skin feels certain Now—
that the world is made of maybes:

Maybe sins are nothing more than mistakes;
maybe God views our lives
like thrilling movies
filmed in Technicolor.

Maybe when he watches,
he does not measure everything we do
or think of doing on a scale
from innocent to guilty.

Maybe he doesn't point a finger
at Mrs. Robinson for screwing Benjamin
or at Benjamin for being screwed,

or at me for wanting victory
tomorrow, above all else.
Maybe I am just like Mrs. Robinson,
whom Jesus loves more than she could ever know.

WHAT THEY DIDN'T CURE

It started with pneumonia
his lungs full of phlegm
his fever a tornado
ripping up
tombstones.

In his hospital room,
bloody soldiers
howling wolves
and prancing devils
besieged his mind.

But he escaped, Naked as Adam,
and headed for the hemlocks
stolen scissors in hand,
trying to cut the air
into shreds.

Two orderlies rushed outside
one grabbed him while
the other thrust a hypodermic
into his shivering hip.

They wrapped
a straight jacket
around his emaciated body
pulled him onto a gurney
rolled him to the eighth floor.

Has he been crazy like that before? the doctor asked.
No, but he drinks an awful lot, Mama said,
then hung her head
like a little girl who'd been
caught killing a kitten.

Delirium tremens—the doctor pronounced
as if he'd solved the riddle of the Sphinx.
A week later, pneumonia cured,
they discharged my father, his eyes shining like
black marbles he'd won from the Devil.

HAVE MERCY

I can't remember
what shoes I wore
that autumn afternoon
as I walked through the sun-dappled forest
or whether I had dreamed myself there.

Either way—awake or asleep,
I came upon a river cooter flaunting its geometrically
perfect home like a neon sign flashing:
God loves me best!
God loves me best!

I coveted its awkward grace—despised its happy solitude.
My hand picked up a rock the color of milk
and slammed it down on the creature's
green and yellow house
the shell cracking sounded like thunder.

Lonely as death,
I stared at the turtle
writhing in its broken home
its dark blood glistening
on golden hickory leaves.

My heart raced like a stampede of turtles
Thou shalt not kill
Thou shalt not kill
Mean as I was, I could not let it suffer—
I hurled another stone.

MARCH 21, 2000

My father died today—
the little boy he used to be stomped
into Dead Mama Heaven
proud as a convert
and crawled into
his mother's lap
as she banged
the last note
on that
organ
she no
longer
has to play
now that he's
finally come home
after seventy five years
of living without her cornbread.

MORNING AFTER HIS FUNERAL

I sit at this table
stirring my creamless coffee
while Rain struggles to wash
Day before it breaks.

I feel body-less
like him whose spirit
has been yanked
to high heaven.

I feel like a statue
tortured by a whirlwind of
clocks running backward,
and laughs yet to be laughed.

But I am comforted by
vowels and consonants,
as they spiral around me
like holy ghosts in a double helix.

Despite their fury,
I clutch them—one by one—
and try to turn
my father into words.

VIA NEGATIVA

I think about
him *only*
in light
never in dark.

I see his heroic smile
as the sun sparkles on
the string of shiny bream
he caught in Sadie's Pond.

I see him on a blanket, his crew cut glistening,
his eyes squinting into the Myrtle Beach sun
while Mama stretches out
beside him, her eyes artfully shaded.

I see him sitting backwards
on a red vinyl kitchen chair
on the front porch on July Fourth
cranking the arm of the ice cream churn.

I don't think about him stumbling
home after midnight
falling across the threshold
onto the tattered braided rug.

I don't think about how
he said shit in his sleep
with a gun
under his pillow.

RECURRING DREAM OF DADDY

In that dream
your back's to me
as you walk down
the Dusty Road of Being
into that broken yolk of a sun
yellowing up the blue sky.

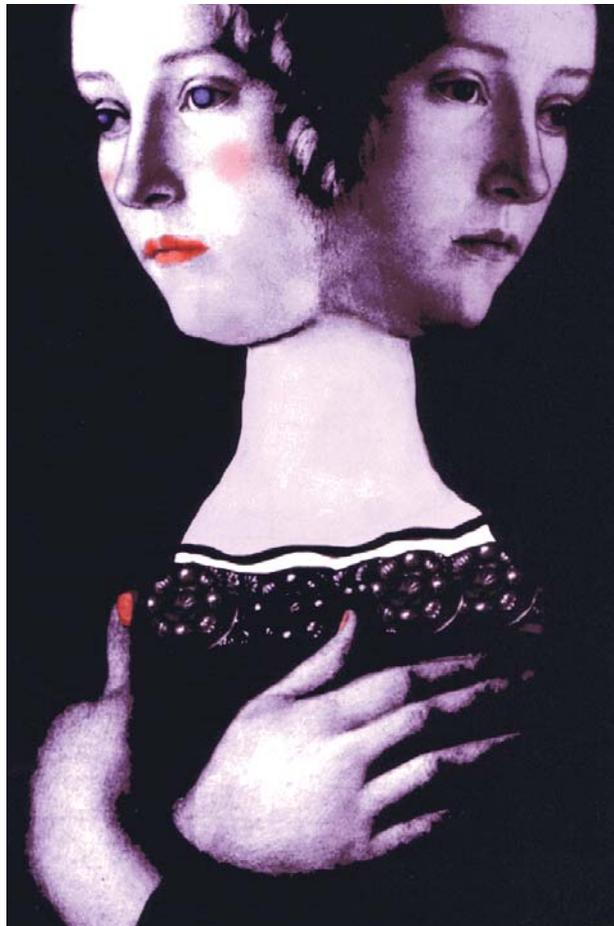
You turn to me
your face full of truth
I can finally interpret
after all these years when
I thought you were just a man
with problems too big to let go of—

I see that you are Not.

You read Me
see I have gotten
only part of your message.
I see you're impatient
with my impatience
just like you used to be.

You see fear
digging into me
like an angry dog
and whisper *Honey,*
wake up
it's only a dream.

PART FOUR



APRIL AGAIN
FOR JOHN

Tomorrow
April comes again
like you came to me
in mock innocence
defying the normal seasons

and then as now
I welcomed the promiscuity
of my attentions
as they jumped
from you to you

you came as a storm
out of a long silence
and pelted me with
hot drops of
kisses

weeds are blooming now
and you are gone
no one ever
to
blame

AS DREAMS USUALLY GO

All night long
I committed adultery
with an old lover as gorgeous
as he was twenty-five years
ago when we fell in love.

We couldn't help it: his desire shocking,
my hunger shameless,
our tongues like
wicks of candles
burning into each other.

We were in an unknown bed
in an unknown room
in an unknown city—
hell, it wasn't
even in this world.

Oh, I can still smell
the patchouli-scented
prismatic orgasms
seething
from our pores.

But as in life—there were intruders:
aunts, uncles, his wife,
my husband,
sniffing around the bed
as if we were invisible.

I think we were, praise God—
because they didn't stop us.
We clung to each other,
his sweat like warm honey
I licked from his chest.

FIRST BORN
FOR CHARLOTTE

Remember how you
crawled under your huge blue bed
and preached a fiery sermon
to your congregation of dust bunnies?

Remember how you pleaded
with me when I drove too fast,
your red hair sprung from your head
like fresh cedar shavings?

I can still see your bright morning face
clouded by your worried brown eyes,
as you admonished me
Slow down, mommy!

You were the first miracle in that small town hell
a bubble of perfection I endeavored to keep from bursting
when you came into contact with all the sharp objects
flying in the air around me.

But the sun forced its rays
through your
resilient membrane
revealing your spectacular colors

while the wind whispered your secret names:
Yellow maiden—Green girl,
White peacock—
Sweet Scarlet Surprise.

OLD GIRL

Days flutter
before my eyes
like silver moths

while I stand in
the soil of my being
wondering whether

I've tilled it well enough
to grow a life that
will blossom into death.

I feel like a
golden ear of corn,
pure succulence

protected by husk and silk
that God
will surely devour

when she grows
hungry
Enough.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Karon Luddy spent the first twenty-one years of her life in Lancaster, South Carolina. In 1975, she moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, which has become her second hometown. For over twenty-five years, she worked in sales and marketing for companies such as Honeywell and Apple Computer. During this time, she also pursued her passion for literature, and, in 1982, she received her BA degree in English from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte.

During a mid-life renaissance, Luddy left the corporate world to spend time with her family—and to write. Her first poem was published in 1999. In the spring of 2002, *The South Carolina Review* published her first short story, “And Here’s To You, Mrs. Robinson,” about a protagonist named Karlene Bridges from fictional Red Clover, South Carolina. In May 2005, she received her MFA in Creative Writing from Queens University as well as a book contract for her first novel. In January 2007, Simon and Shuster published *Spelldown*, Luddy’s first novel, which is based on several of the stories that originally appeared in *The South Carolina Review*. *Wolf Heart* is her first book of poetry.

Karon is married to Tom Luddy, and they have two children. Charlotte Bowman, their daughter, lives in Fort Mill, South Carolina, with her husband, Todd, and their two children. David Luddy, Karon’s and Tom’s son, lives in Charlotte with his wife Olivia.