

Sheila Black

WHAT YOU MOURN

The year they straightened my legs,
 the young doctor said, meaning to be kind,
 Now you will walk straight
 on your wedding day, but what he could not
 imagine is how even on my wedding day
 I would arch back and wonder
 about that body I had before I was changed,
 how I would have nested in it,
 made it my home, how I repeated his words
 when I wished to stir up my native anger
 feel like the exile I believed
 I was, imprisoned in a foreign body
 like a person imprisoned in a foreign land
 forced to speak a strange tongue
 heavy in the mouth, a mouth full of stones.

Crippled they called us when I was young
 later the word was *disabled* and then *differently abled*,
 but those were all names given by outsiders,
 none of whom could imagine
 that the crooked body they spoke of,
 the body, which made walking difficult
 and running practically impossible,
 except as a kind of dance, a sideways looping
 like someone about to fall
 headlong down and hug the earth, that body
 they tried so hard to fix, straighten was simply mine,
 and I loved it as you love your own country
 the familiar lay of the land, the unkempt trees,
 the smell of mowed grass, down to the nameless
 flowers at your feet—clover, asphodel,
 and the blue flies that buzz over them

*Sheila Black lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Her recent chapbook **How to Become a Maquiladora** received honorable mention in the Main Street Rag Chapbook Contest. A larger collection **House of Bone** will be published in spring 2007. Black was born with x-linked hypophosphotomia (XLH), more commonly known as vitamin D resistant rickets.*