

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.