

## Childhood

When I was three, I wrote my name:

GAiL. Mother was not impressed.

When I was four, I played

Haydn and Mozart melodies:

Mother did not hear. I hid

under sinks and beds: She thought

I was *teched*.

At five, I began to write in my closet

as the stars held me in their shine.

I climbed trees, rode my bike across the valley,

Ate picnics in cemeteries on shade-cooled marble,

Traced the letters with one finger,

Weeded gardens and planted flowers,

Hid in treetops to think,

read books, dream.

I collected marbles, stamps, and postcards,

Wrote about princesses and dogs.

From halfway around the world

My aunt sent me my only doll:

Hand-stitched almond eyes on a silk face,

Red pants with a matching shirt,

Red cotton strap shoes,

Hand-knit, small-stitched silk socks.

I often peered into the yard-deep hole

just outside the sunken garden, thinking:

If I dug far enough,

I could live with my aunt in China,

Take the fish and asparagus I did not want

To the war-starved children with the bloated bellies.