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Woman's Work

Molly Brown

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Woman's Work

Molly Brown

Now I know what it means
to laugh and cry at the same time:
Now I get it, mama, all your pain—
How your heart was broken by men,
and how a woman can break a man in kind

I felt how you shattered like the heirloom crystal
thrown from cabinets, slicing rubies
across soft skin the color of white jade—
Or were you the glass coffee table
that was dragged to the lawn
with its legs in the air, helpless and naked?
Here I am, the result of all these things—
And none.

After all my tears had gone and left me dry,
I could finally hear my ancestors sing.
They stood in the kitchen with bare feet
kneading bread, dark hair and knowing eyes

covered by heavy, homespun veils.
They tutted over my prone form
as they swept away SAQ and ashes:

"GOD didn't put us here to be loved;
They put us here to work hard
knowing how hard women can work.
GOD didn't put us here to be loved;
They put us here to raise villages
and hold our sister's hand,
sweeping back her plaited hair
while she heaved in labor,
drenched in cold sweat.

And when we saw that child, we wept—
Full of joy and terror,
knowing the world she was born into
and would have to make her own;
Laughing and crying at the same time."

Eggs Maryanne Zamora

