

## The Quickening

The touch is delicate,  
like a petal  
brushed  
against the wrist  
but not  
accidental  
a message  
that initiates you  
to a mystery  
and you know  
beyond book-learning  
beyond  
the sonogram's  
blurred proof  
that the message comes  
from another being  
inside yourself  
but not  
your self  
a new life  
asserting itself  
like a green shoot  
shattering  
its hard, black seed

## Nothing More to Say

My baby died

silence          my punishment

my own silence                  others'  
    silent discomfort

    frail condolences      crumple  
like flowers

before the steel door

                            of my face

                            uncle shushed

            for noting my pallor

She's been ill, dear  
from aunt who lost two at birth

nothing more  
            to say to me

the baby died  
                            nothing more  
                            to say

## Presences

Ancient presences are here already  
on this healing ground  
merged with new foliage of the oaks  
soft grass    lupine flowers

one by one we draw more women  
into the circle of shared heritage  
mothers    grandmothers    daughters

“I am Maureen  
daughter of Gweneth  
grand-daughter of Lilian ...”

suddenly there you are

“mother of Jane who died at birth”

named at last  
and leading by the hand  
all our other lost children  
whose mothers' hidden griefs  
we share in sisterhood