

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

To the Mother of a Dead Marine

Your boy once touched me, yes. I knew you knew
when your wet, reddened gaze drilled into me,
groped through my clothes for signs, some residue
of him—some lusciousness of mine that he
had craved, that might have driven his desire
for things perilous, poisonous, out-of-bounds.
Could I have been the beast he rode to war?
The battle mounted in his sleep, the rounds
of ammunition draped like unblown blossoms
round his neck? Could I have somehow flung
myself against the wall of his obsessions,
leaving spells and curses on his tongue?
Your fingers tighten, ready to engage
the delicate hair-trigger of your rage.