**The Search**

Antonela Pallini-Zemin

“excuse me, where’s the wife i ordered?”

the waiter looks at me as if i’d spoken

in another language. truth is

i don’t know where else to look for her.

i have looked for my wife in an institution

that was neither mental nor academic,

or that maybe was both. i looked for her

in my bay leaves and cinnamon baths,

in the lees of every coffee i daily have,

in the rain puddling on the grass

in Eaton Park.

i looked for her in the ceaseless hum

of the Argentinian brown sea,

in different dictionaries, monolingual,

bilingual, thesaurus, and collocations,

every entry, every exception.

i looked for her on page 350 of the

Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse.

i looked for her in the missing pieces

of a puzzle of a broken smile,

in the *casuarinas* and pines,

in the *madreselvas* and the ever-spying daffodils,

on the shelves at the library and the shelves at

Thorns, in the thorns of all the roses in England,

in the crumbs of my every morning toast.

i have looked for her in my astral projections

into other dimensions, or were they dreams?

i looked for her in the dilemmas posed by

a philosopher or a poet, or both.

i looked for her in the blue line, in the gaps

between the tiles of every floor i walk,

behind every skirting board.

i have looked everywhere, so i thought

i might as well just ask for it,

casually, to a waiter who looks at me

as if I’m speaking in another language:

“excuse me, where’s the wife i ordered?”