**Emma Jewel**

*-The Child I Cannot Have*

Michelle McMillan-Holifield

I.

You are born in this poem, existing only on this canvas

where my head and heart and body are healthy

where I can say something and my hands make it so.

Emma, like me: given to tempestuous breaths and seasoned riots.

You are all the spindly colors of summer.

II.

As I write, you set in motion all the dreams I wanted for my husband

and all the fears blooming like calla lilies inside me

In this poem your plump, pink fingers curl like springy offshoots

around the veins of my heart. You are elastic.

You come back to my mind again and again

as youth-dumb things I said about not wanting children.

It was fear. It was a mask.

III.

I am a woman lonely in her bones for a child.

God, arrange me. Make my body obey so there can be

lifeblood and heartblood and lungblood

so that I may give to my husband and love and be loved

and bear fruit and bloom like daisy or lilac or light or song

so that my life is not in vain

so that someone might call me mother.