**In the Key of Blue**

Janet E. Irvin

Sunday afternoons the Kopp women

gathered in the long drawing room,

infants at breasts, skirts hiked above

nylon legs and magpie laughter.

In the kitchen, the men drank beer

and argued politics while children swooped,

song sparrows in full throat, from porch

to patio. The rich Hungarian voices swelled

above the chirping chorus, competing

to claim the latest morsel of family

scandal. At nine or ten, I hovered, humming,

a tiny beak inserted in between the cracks,

hungry to snatch the scrambled consonants

of a language rich in the music of mystery,

often moving from crescendo to diminuendo,

to reductive curse words and whispered

invective, the honeyed notes left in church,

the conversation about the fallen son

delivered like the sullen complaint

of a startled blue heron.