**From My Three Former Selves**

Susan Landgraf

**1.**

I had much in common with spiders

spinning stories in my head

in the dark cellar lit by bare bulbs –

a halved child

living in a cement box underground.

Days at my grandparent’s I roamed

raspberry bushes, rhubarb, grape arbor

and clothes lines.

The breeze-blown sheets

smelled like grass.

**2.**

I craved a sea I’d never seen but didn’t swim

in the nearby lake with dead fish.

I worshipped green and the yellow

rose-hued pears

those on the ground abuzz with bees.

Sundays I suckled

on readings from the holy book, the sermon

and intercessory prayer. Rest of the week

I curled up on a cushioned bay window seat

at the library and listened to voices

from Italy, China, Greece.

I learned the difference between microscope

and telescope.

**3.**

Last time I saw my sister, her face looked

waxed in her white satin-lined box.

*Kiss your sister*

*goodbye*, the priest said. I’d already defied

my father. I vowed I would not blind

my windows, I would worship

birds and phosphorescence. I would kiss

the living, not the dead.