

FOR HANNAH

Her neighbors sit murmuring, leaning together:
"Hannah was so sweet--" "so caring--" "so good--"
clucking, repeating, letting their voices catch.
All around the ritual room of shaking heads,
sometime-friends recite her in psalter tones.
Their sibilance, swarming over her bier
like bees, invades my head, stings my rage.

At least no mawkish mass will fill such a space
once my lips are cosmetically closed.
They could never muster enough charity
to honey their tongues with me. What right
have they to my name in their warm mouths!
What right to hers!

Dear Hannah--
maybe even you weren't always wonderful.
Or maybe you lived on low amperage--
never knowing how it is
to run on your own hot crossed-circuits,
splicing with scorched fingers
your own frayed smoking wires. Maybe you
never smelled the char, heard the crackle.

Or maybe you did it all and knew it well
under insulation of infinite grace.

I bite down on my silence, taste its dull acid.
Silence, you believed, is where life's learning
begins. In silence to come, to keep,
I will make myself your monument.

--Glenna Holloway