

GLENNA HOLLOWAY

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U. S. A.

OLD WIVES THE TALES COME FROM

Crocheting string doilies, antimacassars  
no one wants, filling boxes,  
filling huge cotton prints, sleeves sloping  
like tents, hooks unfastened back of the neck,  
they string out death in rocking chairs.  
Daily they fatten to fill their final boxes,  
paying out advice no one needs, paying  
out the slow twine, enlarging the old designs,  
straining fifty-odd years of wifery  
for a mite to impress the young ones  
tightening against their webs and cardboard,  
closing in with the last lid.

They wait-- frayed sheaths-- used awhile  
by knife-voiced kin who own everything in focus  
outside the net of squares and wheels.  
On humid suburban evenings, on some deserted  
concrete patio, they group like toadstools,  
picking at the threads of the days' patterns,  
unraveling their mouths,  
honing their only weapons.

--Glenna Holloway

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES,  
PRIZE POEMS, 1977, 1st prize  
SOUNDINGS, 1985, Chicago Poets Club anthology