

Song of the Counsellor

the man who totes in a pocket his
dead father, shrunk to a sucking-thumb
the woman who stands like a thick
slash pine obsessed with ax blades
the woman who can't go out without drinking
a shot of sparkling cold hate
the man who dreams of giving birth
to fat black roaches
the woman who keeps cracking herself in two
like a wishbone, coming up short
the man who tries to set his retinas
on fire because, he whimpers
there's never enough light

all these and more I tack in place
on the long cloth of each day
tapestries making Bayeux look like a sampler
stitched histories my sure fingers
can spread, smooth, hang, fold, shelve
while there's time: you see

at night they rustle out of
their files, leap whooping off neat sheets
I know how they rise in roiling
colors, tatterdemalion shapes
how they prance twirl high-kick scuff
bumpity-thump all over
that slippery warpleless mirror-polished
floor with my face

— *Cynthia Cahn*