

JOYCE K. LUZZI

Unheard Wording

Even on a day as old as this one,
A day that clings to summer with weakened,
Time-chafed hands, I hear your voice, familiar
Arrogance spread out stiff-necked, dry, sharp
As the beach rose tongues that scrape and score
Their vicious, dark-veined markings on my legs
Every August when I gather the hips for making
Jam;

Even on a night as new as this one,
I see your face, hot gesture scorching
The strings that bind us, teasing, testing
The tensile strength, that special cord
Wound in between our fragile days
And nights, to toughen up
The core;

And your eyes, dark as old jelly
Lost to the back of the cupboard, sugar gone thin,
Fruit done-in, amber glass cutting through the heart
Of our red-taped years setting them gentle as jewels
Into my hand;

And I taste the sharp aroma of your breath
Laid comfortless as briars in my throat, the steeping
Brew made fragrant, flavourless as your independence—
Recipe set down permanent, valid as any old-time truce
Written in mingled blood or pushed into the bite
Of this needle, indelible, final draft inked-in, names
Placed under the skin, mother/daughter
Permanent