

## **All This**

After a year of rain,  
four months of lying  
in the hospital,  
after shedding  
forty pounds,  
after weeks of wakening  
to a stranger  
tapping a vein  
in my arm  
to draw blood and snapping  
the rubber tourniquet,  
after a horde of nurses  
with needles, stethoscopes  
and thermometers  
introducing themselves,  
Terry, Shannon, Pat,  
each shift, each day  
of the week,  
after my abdomen,  
soft as a pear,  
is sliced open, stapled  
shut, then reopened again,  
four different times,  
until finally  
an open wound is left,  
large enough  
to lay my hand  
down inside,  
after my friends  
file one by one  
into my room  
before each surgery  
whispering to me,  
kissing my cheek and mouth,  
Jeanette humming lullabies to me,  
Roseann holding my hand  
for days, Jim crying,  
after tubes plunge  
down into my throat

to my stomach, up my nose,  
in my penis,  
through holes  
the surgeons drill,  
after months of holding  
a pillow  
against my abdomen  
so it doesn't spill  
out onto the floor  
when I walk  
around the station,  
after listening  
to my dead father  
say: *if you cross over,*  
*we'll meet you*  
and alongside him  
my sister in her yellow nightgown  
at the foot of my bed,  
after pain  
becomes my only prayer,  
my body moaning for God,  
not caring who hears me,  
after hypnotic drugs  
convince me I am wounded  
in the Civil War,  
pleading that they  
not amputate,  
after five operations,  
shaved, then scrubbed  
with washcloths,  
and waking up, soaking  
with urine, delirious  
and haunted, not knowing  
whether it is winter or spring,  
after all this,  
the maple tree,  
the red outside my window,  
leaves me stunned.