

Sharon McIlwee

## THE LIZARD IN MY SPINE

It grew inside my mother with me  
it sleeps like a question mark  
it ails me when the moon is full.

Since the man  
placed his hand  
under the small  
of my back  
and lifted and entered me  
and left his sorrow inside —  
the lizard has craved his return.

She  
can be an angel when her flesh  
turns to feather  
and her claws to dust —

then I sleep in peace,  
not answering doors that no  
one has knocked upon.

Sometimes the lizard forgets  
to take the bad with the good  
For her there is just the bad  
and she sees  
no  
way  
out.

She snarled  
when you came near me  
because you were not the type  
to enjoy  
my hair unmanageable.

Somehow one or two or  
three of my friends  
imagine something of the lizard  
but they look into my eyes  
not knowing where she hides.

Once she came up behind me  
while I was at a mirror  
and all I saw was shadow.

Once, like this  
I saw a man  
with a preying mantis  
in his body.

