

Bev Braune

## THE MASK

From the safe distance of her studio,  
his wife rose with hands of thick gritty plaster  
with which she struggled.  
The studio opened into the house  
upon wide accordion doors.  
She turned from the wet mask before her  
and walked down the hall to a husband  
full of questions that she did not wish to answer.  
She stood at the entrance of his study,  
her hands held out like a surgeon's.  
"Erda...", he began  
but suddenly looking into her eyes,  
he became speechless.  
"I'm really in the middle of something important, Harold,"  
she said and turned her back on him  
retracing her steps down the hall, still saying:  
"I'm really busy but I could leave this door open  
so you will feel, at least,  
that I can hear you from the studio."  
She padded back to the large airy room,  
pushing the doors up to their mooring posts.  
A warm light lifted oily, gritty smells  
from its plastered panels and wet paintings.  
She returned to the large plaster mask  
to grapple with the bust of a heavy-lidded woman  
and the silence between the study  
and the accordion doors spread wide.