

EDITH SPEERS

NIGHTMARES

I Our bed is rotten.
 We peel back the mattress,
 the underside is mouldering.
 White worms writhe
 and black beetles glitter
 among the grey wads of cotton.

 What once was clean
 and buoyant as clouds fresh
 talced with the sun's gold
 is now foetid.
 The scavengers of decay
 are back to back with us
 like swamp reflections.

II You are taking a bath
 with the prostitute.
 I'm waiting — for what? —
 in the hallway.
 I hear the splashes,
 domestic laughter,
 bare feet on linoleum
 like echoes of you and me.

 Whores have their advantages.
 Satisfaction is unsullied
 by the need for daily decencies.
 The transaction is traditional —
 no one quibbles
 about complicated feelings.
 The pain of betrayal is doubled
 as I wake and realize
 that she was me.