The sea whips out the first winter winds
which sweep up sand into clouds. In a week
the tourists will leave and the road to the village will be deserted
enough for a few stray dogs and me. The wind has begun
to rattle the sign at the butcher, to carry drops of sea like a cold
hand. I am beginning to know life on the island in winter,
though it is only fall, though the women will kneel in the olive grove
for hours in weeks, and the men will shake the branches to release the
fruit. The tourist shops are shuttered tight. And the young Greek men
have returned to Athens. I no longer hear English in the platía.
Stray cats, frantic for scraps, scurry from chair to chair while packs of dogs scamper
along the road without fear of what's coming. When we sit with the
kerosene heater
lit, holding our coffee or tea, we are almost in a huddle, the trahanás dry in
the cupboard,
the wine jugged under the sink, olives piled in containers. The chickens cluck
outside the bedroom window and the rooster that was somewhere else this
summer
has returned with his loud racket. It is obvious we are poised for survival.
It is obvious when the ferries stop coming from the mainland, when the
newspapers
stay old. It is obvious when a neighbor invites me to the fields to scavenge
for olives, her legs covered with black stockings, her dress layered in wool, her
head
kerchieved, like a tight-skinned olive. It is obvious when I feel uneasy,
resist
the village cloth, the subordinate stance in the fields. I'd rather climb the tree,
wield
the long stick, wait for my food to be served at dinner, and then join the
men at the kafenión, oblivious to me.