Piracy

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Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol13/iss1/24
PIRACY

Anne Woodward

Last night someone pulled the bedcovers up over my head
And sewed them to the mattress.

Meanwhile, I stood watch high in the crow’s nest of my ship,
Machete in mouth,
    That in a pinch I could
Sink my knife into the sail
And plunge deckward to join the fight.

I had woven the sail, like the bedcovers,
Out of sun-stained olive-colored cotton curtains
Once hanging in an art classroom on the fifth story of a German high school.
I could hear the traffic ripping through
The fresh spring childhood hours below,
The juice of the hours trailing out of the corners of my mouth, rejoining
    at the chin.

As a young pirate I was scolded for holding my machete incorrectly:
    Blade dangling through the hole made with my thumb and index finger,
Walking slowly through the classroom.
I can still hear the teacher telling me,
A respectable pirate clenches his knife and his teeth
A respectable pirate always carries his machete with him, even to bed.