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Giving Birth

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Potato Salad

Cup carefully the potato lifted from
under ground and boiled
thin skin removed
for knifing into firm white squares.
Grasp deliberately the cucumber
fattened in sunlight
nubby between smooth green planes
pungent when cut to the soft inner flesh.
Handle deftly the small radish
bright fast growing from
brown shriveled seed to plump
scarlet globe
zesty hot beneath cool surface.

Above all cradle gently the sweet onion
ringed and layered
infant daughter chubby
toddler grubby tom girl bobby
soxer bleeding adolescent shy bather
aproned waitress coed smiling lacy
bridesmaid engaged sweetheart
bride house wife mother
to a center beyond tears
a girl woman growing
not a core waiting but
a shoot reaching
for light.

Helen Petter Westra

Giving Birth

Daughter,⁴ the north wind moans in the valley
pounding the ridges where bare trees thrash
and soil streaks the snow.
Red light spills through swollen clouds.
The evening sky is a bloody show.
Daughter, the landscape is yours tonight.
Raise your voice, cry, shout.
You will live to know we are sisters
in this issue of life.

Helen Petter Westra