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Job's Wife

Donelle R. Ruwe
Northern Arizona University, donelle.ruwe@nau.edu

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Job's Wife

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips. (*Job 2.9-10*)

In all this did not Job sin with his lips though
he sinned in body, for she had found a strand
of her handmaid's hair inside his inner robe.
He denied, she denounced, and, unresolved, they settled
for the slow reunion of the bed where she forgave him
to know again his breath a shiver against her nape.

That morning, spinning carded wool
into serviceable yarn, she could not bear
its weight, the warmth of practical coils waiting
for the loom, weaving, dye, and cut.
By evening, she was gone.

A week passed, then two. At first Job dismissed it,
a woman in a snit, she'd come back, he'd seen it before,
but after months of pitying looks from goatherds
and gossip that she was living in town, he knew.
Then came the boils, and he went mad.

Three friends found him in the kitchen midden
scraping his skin with a pot shard. The first brought
a servant to fan away flies. The second, a silk folding stool.
The third stood to one side. Job rejected their talk of repentance,
ranted of challenges in heaven, deals between Satan and God.

In the months of blaming God, the gays, aliens
on the border, Job had forgotten his wife's voice,
her low pitch and rich diphthongs, so when the one
who stood spoke, Job heard neither gender nor age,
only a cyclone's rage, a scolding grit, familiar and strange.

Poor you. Poor you. It's always you. Get up, shave.
Later Job marveled at God's intimate tone. He longed
to tell his wife, to hear her clearheaded wisdom and advice.
He called her name. He pressed her pillow against his mouth.
It held her scent, but it had no ears for listening, no eyes for his eyes,
and though he commanded, he could not make it care.

Donelle Ruwe is an Associate Professor of English at Northern Arizona University. She is Co-President of the 18th- and 19th-Century British Women Writer's Association and a member of the Annual *Lion and the Unicorn* Award for Excellence in North American Poetry committee. Her chapbook *Another Message You Wish the Point of* received the 2006 Camber Press Poetry Chapbook Prize.