

POEMS BY KATHARYN MACHAN AAL

## KAREN, MY ROOMMATE

You were always the one to be so free sitting there on your bed beading necklaces for yourself, smoking marijuana with the woman who lived downstairs. I envied you, your sleek body dancing down the hall, vour brown eyes staring into the distance, your mind like a cave no candle could pierce. Maybe I loved you as you swept across the campus, prima donna with that laughing smile, arrogant bitch full of beautiful promise, child in pain seeking arms, warm arms.

## HEARD AT THE NEXT TABLE

Over a small mushroom pizza they talk about love. "I get tired," she moans, "of waiting, you might come for dinner, stay two days, then I won't see you for five." "Judy," he says, "Judy, Judy." "You dare to sit there telling me you were using me?" she shouts in the half-filled restaurant. He mumbles in his crust. pops a can of beer. "We'll stop sleeping together, see what happens then," she whispers, "my friends won't care, they know-" His belch cuts her off. "Don't you care, care, care?" she wails. A sauce-red mushroom drops between them. "Judy," he says.

## IN THE LETTER

"I soon found out" she wrote "why his marriage came so fast the new one was with child all that time I'd wondered why"

now she visits northern beaches tippling cranberry air she writes "I see few people but there are the cats"

and poems bitter red