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## Family Reunion

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# Family Reunion

– Barbara Armbruster

“What side of the family?” the child asked,  
Having just learned that a family has sides,  
Much as a war has sides,  
And for the same reasons.

How to explain to this male child,  
That our family descends from women,  
That men are by tradition invisible,  
Like some mystery of religion.

I can recite a litany of hard times  
And hard deaths that left our women  
To take in wash, sell the farm, clerk in stores,  
Do without, go unloved, give up dreams.

At my house it was the love that died  
And not my father, but we were taught  
To call him dead, to wipe out traces of his existence,  
So that - except for me - he never was.

Staring now at his contraband picture,  
Saved as an act of heresy by some aunt,  
I feel communion with his easy stance, knowing smile,  
“My father’s side,” I tell the child, “My father’s side.”