First alphabet

her teeth my teeth are dirt
we are
under words without words before words

we she eats dirt, marks
on trees with mud paste
in a dark dark green place

her face my face is squirrel
turns is frog is rabbit

she learned the signs from
inside blood
no human
no thought word shaped

she we draw signs in dirt
our teeth are pointed, gritty

Lou Robinson

DEER

Her eyes opened and she was awake. If she stayed there too long under the quilt then the big bed might fold in half, trapping her like an animal in woolly blanket jaws. The moonface clock said five. Of course it was habit. All those years when Les had to get up early to drive to the plant in the city. Her feet groped for slippers. She tied the red bathrobe loosely, walking into the kitchen.

She snapped on the light making the room into a small lit square against the dark. The window panes became black and opaque. She could not see the barn from the window over the sink, pouring water in the coffee pot. Only the old oak, leaning toward the house to get warm. The coffee percolating sounded like the cricket that lived in the cellar all winter behind the potato bin.

The water from the bathroom tap was rusty in her mouth. It had made a stain through the years like a map of Africa in dried blood. The water washed the texture of blankets out from under her tongue. In the mirror, she saw the wires of her hair held a few drops of water. "Old woman," she said to the face. The face did not displease her. It looked like an old brown Indian woman's face.

Lifting the hairbrush she remembered the dream. It was the badger dream again. It was the only creature she had ever shot except the fox that had killed her geese and guinea hens. The badger was going to kill her old dog. Like one mad thing they had spun in the dust, snarling and yelping. In her dream she saw the flash of the little white teeth, heard the cowbell on her dog's collar clang. She had shot the badger thousands of times since then in her sleep.