

## How Aunt Maud Took to Being a Woman

A long hill sloped down to Aunt Maud's brick house.  
You could climb an open stairway up the back  
to a plank landing where she kept her crocks of wine.  
I got sick on stolen angelfood cake and green wine  
and slept in her feather bed for a week.  
Nobody said a word. Aunt Maud just shifted  
the bottles. Aunt's closets were all cedar lined.  
She used the same pattern for her house dresses—  
thirty years. Plain ugly, closets full of them,  
you could generally find a new one cut and laid  
out on her sewing machine. She preserved,  
she canned. Her jars climbed the basement walls.  
She was a vengeful housekeeper. She kept the blinds  
pulled down in the parlor. Nobody really walked  
on her hardwood floors. You lived in the kitchen.  
Uncle Cal spent a lot of time on the back porch  
waiting to be let in.

—from *Second-Hand Coat*, 1987