

## The Madonna Smile

Just plunk the groceries down, turn up  
the radio volume as your hands  
make busy noise: rustling, thunking,  
slamming cupboard doors. You like the  
clock, it's a loud one; like scrubbing  
and scouring the copper pots; chopping  
at the vegetables. Singing out your lungs  
to avoid the silence next door.

She slipped so quietly past my window,  
white shawl over one shoulder, basket full  
of weeds. Never heard from him again; never  
heard her make the noise of pain again. She  
never spoke—a whiff of sweet burning  
told me she was widowed . . . and her eyes  
looking over, looking through the gentle silence.

JOY HEWITT MANN