GERRE GALVIN

An Oral Tradition

I stroll on ancient stones of Plaka, climbing winding streets above the moonstone sea. Garlic scents simmer, skirts swish behind ivy walls and whitewashed homes while muted female voices strum the air.

Young men, sleepy-eyed, lean on round tables and sway to my silhouette. My prickling skin feels their stirring, behind me. The cicadas' shrill hum joins the men's chorus of whispers, whistles and clicking tongues. I pass wrinkled men sipping espresso, flipping, clicking red worry beads through unworried fingers, while the growing chorus of men match footsteps to mine and follow in a predacious line.
Montpellier encloses me
in her mazelike streets.
Men's bodies fan the air and
their voices brush my ears,
whispering, "I want you," and
"Come sleep with me."
These night men
stalk alleyways
like loitering tomcats
or wait in tight pants
with café crossed legs;
their eyes forcing an opening.
Some fingers graze, others probe,
and some try to caress me like a lover.

I hasten along the creaking
boardwalk of Provincetown,
past shop windows
with copper windchimes,
cobalt pitchers and
green quilted pillows.
Two men lean, leering
out their car window
and yell: "Wanna get laid?"
Their honking and laughing
hammers the afternoon air.

"Psst."
Clickety click of night tongues.
a smacking of many lips in a wet kiss.
A whispered "hey baby."
A sideways, "Uhmm, good."
The chorus finds me.

And then, a note splitting the
green trees' stillness—
"Bitch"
from a boy
perched high in a fir tree,
twelve and cocky
in my clean Canadian town.