ELIZABETH BREWSTER

Lot’s Daughters

They thought they were alone in the world, they and their father: their mother left behind, transformed by her tears to a tombstone of salt; their violent neighbours buried in the flaming ruins of Sodom, along with the young men who were to have been their husbands and the houses where they might have spent their lives.

The men, or angels, who had rescued them and led them out of the city had vanished into the ruined landscape leaving these two young girls with their ageing, timid father.

Climbing above the plains into the wild hill country, carrying their small supplies of bread and wine, they took shelter in a cave, huddling in its darkness away from their fiery memories;
hoped for some grains or berries
not far from the cave,
a spring of water,
the milk of a wild goat,
grapes to crush,
a human future.

They remembered those old stories
they had heard as children,
how the world had once before
been destroyed by water,
thought that this time destruction
had come by fire and ash.

But surely it was up to them
once more to save the human race
by making their grieving father drunk
on the last of the wine
planning a virtuous incest
which would make them
mothers of future generations.

Did the hovering guardian angels
smile when they heard their plot,
thinking survival, after all,
the greatest proof of virtue?