

Birth
Johnson Cheu
Ohio State University

Often you have told me
the story of my birth:
how early you complained to the doctor
of bleeding, a sign he ignored,
how he went on vacation,
and you had to switch
to his partner, young, inexperienced,
how this doctor was away
lowering his handicap
when you went into premature labor.
Now, at thirty, you reveal:
The nurse told me, "suck him back in!"
You had crowned, your head was out,
and the doctor hadn't arrived,
so the nurse said to suck you back in.
Stupid woman, I ignored her - I mean,
you would have died.
I imagine you at that moment
young, obedient Chinese girl turned
defiant, protective mother,
the power in your body and breath.
I see every if only the doctor
had told me about bedrest;
every quivering lip at a doctor's prognosis,
damaged son, helpless child.
Others finding fault
in your defiance
when you ignored her and pushed
my body out.
Our lives opened.

7/99