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From *Mother Tongues And Other Untraveling*, A Sequence

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FROM *MOTHER TONGUES AND OTHER UNTRAVELINGS,*
A SEQUENCE

With the money she sent for my birthday, I buy a pair of black suede pumps in summer. They're for a wedding I am going to, the kind of shoes she'd approve of, a grown woman's shoes. I wobble a little in them; I'm used to tennis shoes, flat-heeled sandals, hiking boots. These are what I've been walking away in, so that when I visit, I come in looking like a child out playing and called to dinner. Don't you have anything nice to wear, they say, she and my mother; it is what makes me theirs, inadequate and needy. With every birthday, every year I call my own, they remind me of my daughterhood, of what I owe. When they have dressed me properly I would be whole, returned; I would grow into what they buy me to wear. What will they say now that these new heels won't send me back to them elegant and sure, walking in the right direction? What will they say now that I am travelling away as ever, in my heels, in my resemblances, these slow blood migrations?