

Providence College

DigitalCommons@Providence

English Faculty Publications

English

1994

A Handful of Bees

Dzvinia Orlovsky
Providence College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/english_fac



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

Orlovsky, Dzvinia, "A Handful of Bees" (1994). *English Faculty Publications*. 11.
https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/english_fac/11

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the English at DigitalCommons@Providence. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Providence. For more information, please contact dps@providence.edu.

Morning

Nothing can disturb you now —
your sleep is the sleep
of a basin of water
where a woman
has washed her face.

This is the hour
of churchyard haze,
the pale pink sun
around heads of saints.
It must be their slow light
that carries here
to the grassfields, the cornfields,
the hand-carved wheat.

If only I could wake you!
The steam in barns has started to rise,
and there behind the wooden shed —
the last piece of moon
in an empty pail.

Burying Dolls

The camps have long stopped burning
when Mother toasts my birth with cognac;
Father films, the dog sniffs my crib.

Barbie is sent to work camp in my closet.
The officers like her pony tail.
Ask Mother.
Ask her how they'll come at night
to choose their women.

My children will bury
dolls in the garden,
whisper masses for processions of shoe boxes.
I'll tell them: women have to look strong
to stay alive.

Ask Grandmother.
Watch her every morning
lightly slap her face
to give it color.

Poland

The light on Mother's face
divides her in half.
Outside a garden hides its shadow,
a summer blouse
folded once. The moon guides light,
thread sliding through
the silver eye
or the thin white blood
of the Eucharist:
some eternal secret
passes from hand to mouth.
I want to feel the interiors
of churches,
breath of stone,
ancestors I can't touch.
So I watch the sleep
of my mother's face.

To Our Cosmeticians

1.

You want us to believe
there are only two kinds of women:
the Before
and the After.

In the Before Woman's life
it's always raining.
If you blow on her,
a parachute desperately opens.

She has no lips to speak of.

2.

Turn the page
and the After Woman appears.

She survives the hijacking of her heart.
She is match-lit.

Her blush is the red of a bull's death.
Her hair bounces back for more.

She's been known to bite.

3.

If you ask me what season I am,
I would say late fall —
just at that time
when trees give up
and drop their leaves.

My best colors are:

file cabinet,
highway,
Ohio,

I wear them the way
the wind wears what it passes.

I like my meek mouth,
my no-grapes-on-the-stem look.
It makes me hireable.

4.

But thank you
for your day of beauty.

If I change my skin
it'll be gradual,

the rest of my life.