

Alicia Ostriker

THE UNKNOWN BOY

And if the boy is unknown
we bury him in a hole with a white cross
to remind us of all that is unknown

And if the girl was raped and killed
we plant white flowers there
to remind us that there is no death

And if food is left after a wedding
we leave it in the alley for the poor
to prevent revolution

READING DAN BEACHY-QUICK, *Wonderful Investigations*

The relation of a poem to time is this
a narrative rides along a stream
swift or slow
a lyric opens a door in the stream

it walks through the door
into a space or room
where time is nonexistent

travelling the stream's white rapids
glancing around the infinite room
it begins to smile

And as soon as a thing is said
it becomes true
if it is a poem

if it does not become true
it is not a poem

ON THE BUS

I'm lending you this cd
 (of God singing)
 you won it
 you eat it
you should sit right behind the bus driver
where you get to see more of the scenery
it's bumpier there but that's good it's fitting for this music
or you could sit in the middle
where the ride is a little smoother
still it is only a bus
 you know this music you need to hear this music
 you know this music
your mother also
 the earth also
God also
 torn now torn up now
 But listen
you can't live without it
 how can I get it back

THE WIND THAT BLOWS THROUGH ME

I feel the hand of God inside my hand
when I write said the old woman
this blows me away like a hat
oh oh God's needy hand is inside every atom
waving at us hoping we wave back

Sometimes I feel the presence
of the goddess inside me said the dark red tulip
and sometimes I see her
waltzing in the world around me
skirts flying though everything looks still

It doesn't matter whether you call the thing
God or goddess those are only words
said the dog panting after a run through the park
and a sprint after a squirrel
theology is bunk but the springtime wind is real

Alicia Ostriker is a poet and critic, author most recently of *The Book of Seventy* (2009), *The Book of Life: Selected Jewish Poems 1979-2011* (2012), and the forthcoming *The Old Woman, the Tulip and the Dog*, all from the University of Pittsburgh Press. As a critic she is the author of *Stealing the Language: the emergence of 'Women'[s] Poetry in America*, and other books on poetry and on the Bible. Ostriker teaches in the low-residency MFA Program in Poetry and Poetry in Translation at Drew University.