ANNE HAINES

SWINGING

First there was always the moment
of deciding; I'd settle
onto the yellow plastic
seat, survey the rusting
gym set, my back yard.
The swing would move slightly
under me, twisting
in no direction.
I'd push
myself gently for a moment,
toes against the earth, dry dirt
I'd loosened over years
into a worn brown patch.

Then,
setting my sights, I'd begin
to push in earnest, legs
pumping a huge arc;
arms pulling hard
to balance.
The chains would rattle
at first, the ride rough. But
soon I'd be flying, head flung
back, the sky a perfect blue, wind
wild against my face,
eyes closed in full sun.

I swear there comes a point at the height
of an upswing where gravity releases,
where a girl's small body hangs suspended
to this day, flying like the horizon's curve
over the roof of the house
into blue, the slim anchor
of that plastic seat a broken bond,
the swing returning empty
to earth. There were those moments.
But soon I’d always feel the tremor
of the whole gym set rocking,
one leg loosened from its anchor
in gravel and dirt, the leg
impatiently tapping.
I’d stop
pushing then and hold completely
still, the wind in my hair,
the arc of my swing decreasing,
the sudden awareness of gravity
carrying me down,
palms clasped tight around chains,
toes dragging at last
in soft dry earth.