Girlhood After Rilke  
  
(Where can you find a place  
to keep her, with all the huge strange thoughts inside you  
going and coming and often staying all night.)   
- Quote from Rilke poem, first elegy  
I.  
We’re running together, Time and I, through the streets of our city. Our once-white sneakers squeak down the polished sidewalks and I can feel the sun painting my back red. Her body, always a step ahead, just out of reach. Her body, beautiful and electric, a silvery, sinewy study in dynamic girlhood. Suddenly, Time stops. In the moment I pass, she is within the reach of my soil-stained hands. I reach out to touch but my feet will not stop kicking and they carry me away from her into the next moment into something terrible and frightening and from behind, I hear her tell me to go on ahead, that she’ll catch up. I only turn my head soon enough to see her swallowed by the sun.  
  
II.  
Time is ahead of me, her golden soles slapping the knotted concrete. It is dark and I could feel something breathing down my neck but I choose not to. There is only her, burning beacon in the dark, my solitary sweetheart. Suddenly, Time stops. I catch up but she tells me *go ahead* and I race forth into an unknown kaleidoscope, sacred shapes splayed out against darkness. I am not afraid. I am painted many colors that do not have names and watch myself grow infinitely large, as though dispersing in water. I keep her in my hands, my hair, slipped under my sternum. I keep her like sand in my hourglass hands, like shadows tucked under my heels. I keep her, sun on a string, in my empty body to keep me warm, to keep me running.