

Rachel Barrett

Forked Road

Claire often was said
to be the most
beautiful. Her mother
kept her in a glass
box on her vanity,
only opening it on
holidays. She would
rather like to open
books, she said, but
her mother fed her
carrot cake and dropped
a Polly Pocket into
her hand. Her
father was a religious
man and would
read her bedtime stories,
never leaving out the scenery
or unsettling end.
He would leave her
skylight open
so she could see the stars
and get rained on
(never in the same
night). She lived
like this until her mother
died, and her father, widowed,
married the church.
On her nineteenth birthday
she emerged much
a girl, talked to rabbits.
She never looked
at maps but would
walk in straight
lines and, finding
herself lost, would
nest with the owls
she found there.