

## Isabella Colalillo Katz

### Washing Day II

*for my mother Concetta*

I cling to her blue cotton skirt  
she laughs and chatters all the way to the river  
on her head a large wicker basket  
with our soiled laundry  
the women are carefree  
a half day washing by the river is a kind of holiday  
the sun brightens the mountaintops  
stippled clouds dissolve into puffs of wispy white

my mother puts down her basket  
shakes my hand free  
finds her place on a wide washing stone  
kneels and begins the wash:  
the sheets are first, then the smaller linen  
the women work together, laughing  
telling stories  
finally I see my favourite dress  
the one we bought at the gypsy market  
the green one with wine stains from last Sunday's dinner  
my mother pushes it under the rippling water  
I run behind her wanting to see  
to help  
she screams as I fall on the edge of the stone  
when I'm safe in her arms

*Isabella Colalillo Katz*

I look out at the frothy river  
a woman is laughing,  
another  
is tugging at something with a long stick  
my mother's chestnut eyes are watching  
and then I see it  
my favourite dress  
small and wet  
bobbing  
on the turning waves  
floating gently down river  
under the disapproving glance of  
hurrying clouds