

PILVAX

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Joanne Lowery's poems have appeared in many American literary magazines, including *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *5 AM*, *Passages North*, *Atlanta Review*, *One Trick Pony*, and *Poetry East*. Her chapbook on East European gypsy life, *Gypsy Souls*, is available from Snark Publishing. She lives in Michigan.

Poems

By Joanne Lowery

Romani Girl at the Window

Skinheads wrote Death to the Gypsies
on three of our buildings
and broke our only window.
Now boarded up, it lets me see out
through a gap alone one side.
I am watching for my mother to return
with a hedgehog foot for my toothache.
Or maybe she has gone to the marriage arranger,
taking little Nelu to beg with his eyelashes
like I used to do before I became *marimé*
and had to stay inside with my shame.
The only tree I see is across the street
and partially bare, its leaves
fluttering like pigeons. If I were free like them
I would fly to the mountains
where my grandfather's tribe still lives
or sneak down the halls of the school
and listen to *gadje* explain the world.
But the leaves hang in place on their tree,
and the birds scattered by the skinheads
are pecking through the broken glass
which winks at me in the sunlight.

Poet Without Paper

You call me Gypsy, and for my one week in school
I felt that word. Now I live a Romani life,
a woman's life, without books,
and all the street signs are strangers.
Scrubbing my husband's shirts in a tin tub,
light catches the suds, and there's something
more I want to say. Instead I hum
what last night's violinist played.
I watch the print swirl in my sister's skirt.
The western clouds clench their fists
and a page of newspaper blows down the alley.

More of Joanne Lowery's poems can be found in the SUMMER 2006 issue of PILVAX. Locally available in Budapest.