

MARIA JACKETTI

A COAL NECKLACE

My father gave me a piece
of solidified night.

Remember me,
he said, then coughed
with black lungs,
climbing up from the deep basement.
I was eight years old.
I clutched the stone.
There was fire within
its lake of smoothness.
A fellow coalman designed
the pendant—
a teardrop
crowned
with silver filigree—
it embraced the stone
with a hard lace.

My father and others
fed the earth,
extracted somebody else's plunder,
loved their wives in furious silence,
gave kids mule rides
on angry backs.

Now their offspring recycle luck
or leave behind a scarred map.

But for some, the Earth is a jewel box.

I've searched for years
but still cannot find that fossil tear—
my father's half century of night,
congealed.

MARIA JACKETTI was born in 1960 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. She received a BA in Spanish, French, and Mass Communications from King's College, an MA in Creative Writing from New York University, and a PhD from Warnborough University where she serves as the director of the Graduate Creative Writing Program. She was awarded a poetry fellowship by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and her six well regarded translations of Nobel Laureates Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda were underwritten by grants from the Pennsylvania and New York Councils on the Arts, and the National Endowment on the Arts. She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband, her daughter, and her cats.