

Kate Braid / TWO POEMS

WOMAN'S TOUCH

Lunchtime, sitting on a lumber pile
in the middle of the construction site,
my eye fell
on Sam's 32 ounce hammer
with the 24 inch handle.

*How come all our tools
are longer than they are wide?
I asked.*

Silence.

Feeling reckless
with confidence because
that morning I'd cut
my first set of stairs
at a perfect fit, I pushed on.

*How come the hammer,
the saw, everything
except the tool belt looks like
you know what?*

*Don't be so sensitive, Sam said.
How else could they be?*
There was a chorus of grunts
in the bass mode.
Besides,
Sam was on firm ground now,

the skill saw is round.

Ed raised his head slowly.
The skill saw was invented by a woman
he said, and took a bite of salami.

He finished the meat then sat
quite still, contemplating his Oreos.
In the 1700's in New England, he continued,
her husband had a sawmill
where they cut the logs over a pit
with a man at each end of a huge hand saw.
She noticed they wasted
half their energy, for hand saws only cut
on the push. She had an idea.

Ed took a chocolate bite and chewed.
Even Sam was quiet.
She went into her kitchen,
fetched a pie plate and cut
teeth in it. Then she slipped it
onto her spinning wheel,
fed a cedar shake into it
and the circular saw was born.

Ed folded his brown paper bag.
After a certain silence
Sam spat.
I knew there was something funny
about that saw, he said
and sulked off stomping saw dust.

METAMORPHOSIS

Lumber yard. Tool rental. Tarpaulin shop.
These are the clubhouses of the working men
where they talk real loud,
show posters of naked women,
bump tattoos.

All morning I sneak on kitten's feet
from one post to the other,
purring
so as not to offend
the elected.

But where are clubhouses of the women?
Where can a carpenter put up her boots
slam her hardhat to the counter
and roar
like a lion in heat?