

## SHE SAID IT WAS HER MOTHER'S BREASTS

*Lyn Lifshin*

Pendulous, drooping  
 down over the flab  
 that bulged up out  
 over the girdle  
 that left ridges  
 on her flesh,  
 almost welts.  
 She tried to  
 sleep leaning  
 over the bed,  
 wanted her  
 nipples, tin and  
 rose, her breasts  
 aiming at star light.  
 Mothers ought to  
 keep their breasts  
 like secrets  
 whispered around  
 the dining room  
 table in another  
 language so  
 children shouldn't  
 hear. It was  
 too hideous. Forget  
 the gore in fairy  
 tales, the  
 lewdness of  
 thighs opening  
 and hair dripping.  
 What stinks doesn't  
 just make a baby.  
 Don't, she snarls,  
 her pen digging  
 into paper, worry  
 about *Fanny Hill* or  
*The Story of*  
*O*, nothing she  
 says is as scary  
 as those breasts. It's  
 like death, like  
 those uncles and aunts,  
 who clucked and raised  
 eyebrows at the  
 table and shook  
 their graying heads  
 "no," bolting up

from graves they are  
almost in the same  
positions as they  
were around the  
table sharing what  
they'd kept from me  
before I wanted to  
know