

The Apostle Escapes the Prison: Three Barriers

by Britta R. Kollberg

Peter was sleeping between two guards. He was tied with two chains, and there were guards on duty at the prison gate. (Acts 12, 6)

When I outwalked the first guard, on my toes,
holding my breath, clasping the angel's shawl
and following his footprints, I forgot
to pray—for me as well as for my foes.

The second guard, I passed close by and gazed,
circling around him, straight into his eye.
The shawl waved me ahead. My guard and I
stared through each other with blind looks, amazed.

The iron gate sprung open by itself,
I knew now: the world can't contain my sight.
My shoulder aching still from his first shake,
I watched the angel vanish from my side.

And then I saw: my hands and wrists still chained.
I couldn't start—or turn to look behind.

The Elderly Princess

by Britta R. Kollberg

You've always wanted to be a princess, shining in pink so strongly that the hatred of stepmothers and the envy of fairy godmothers praised your pubescent skin and your eyelashes full as ebony hair. You've always wanted to be that deathlike sleeping girl searched for by blond heroes with hands full of thorns, and stumbled over by a dark prince lost in confusion as he was facing the freedom of dwarfs. But the real princess is an elderly woman. Feeble as the beginning of this new century, she leans her crutch on the chair before she lets herself sink down slowly. She has seen the wars and the misery of new hope, and her skin shines pale above her collar the color of Bordeaux wine. She can be imagined on the back of your mirror, the mirror you watch yourself in spinning inherited millstones into yarn. Your needle will tremble, your wound is the fate of the entire court—or not even yours. The princess will speak and stand up on her crutch and be very delicate. Happily ever after.

