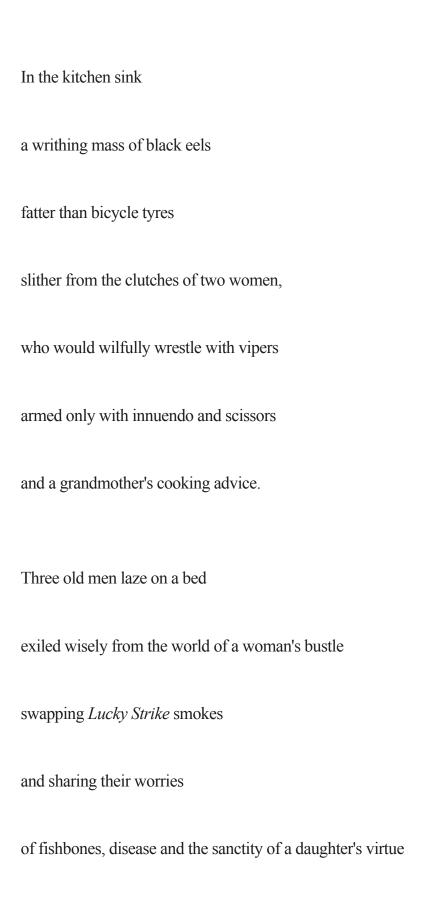
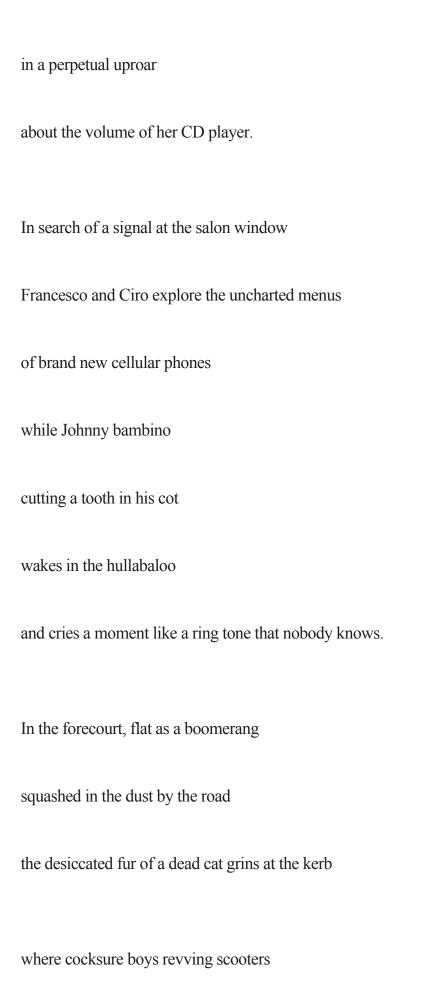
nticelli, Naples New Year 1999



like that of Lucia and Rosa locked in the bathroom turning eyelashes into tarantulas, jealous boyfriends into husbands, and grandmothers in their graves with their curling false lashes and counterfeit perfumes In the apartment below an old lady shouts, 'Number Ten, Maradona'! where a camorrista clan captain obediently plays tombola with his one-eyed mother and from her balcony across the square the prostitute laughs unbothered at loathing lamenting neighbours



and a puppety tangle of junkies

shadow the litter-choked paths between blocks

at a bus stop where nobody waits and no bus ever comes

as the sun goes down

with the aluminium eyelids of shuttered-up shops

in a graffitied backdrop of twilight, broken streetlamps

and street-working girls

the headier hubbub of an evening

spices up the drone of the day

with its usual simmering fusion of restaurant smells

partying traffic, club beats and yelping strays

tonight, on the stroke of twelve the city explodes

like a land suddenly freed with the shriek of whistles, hooters, horns, claxons, bombs, fire crackers and howls and the crash of old furniture thrown from the windows of a lawless mob embracing mayhem and the promise it brings with the purging of chaos prised and vandalised from the soul until it sneaks slowly back in in the morning of the new dawn two thousand years since the birth of Christ where a listless church bell clangs like a ghost ship lost in fog

a wheelie bin smoulders at a stop

where no one waits

and the bus never comes

where a dead cat squashed in the dust

grins at a world that burns

like the long abandoned care of a dream gone wrong.

© Gina Paola Ritch 1999