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JUNIA

Excluded from religious instruction
She grinned at us through the windows
As she sought refuge in the library
Banished to the books.

Her parents were A-THE-ISTS
Which we whispered in fear
In case the word
Would devour us.

As we heard about love and forgiveness
By Jesus
And John and Joseph
Junia remained apart

The fine precision of her wit
The forest of her heart
And the infinite expanse
Of her soul

Deborah Fraser

TANIA

Tania has strong-minded hair
And sensitive skin
She would carefully match her clothes
To her hair ribbons
And place her shoes in tidy pairs

Her eel-hunting
Fire-cracker brothers
Made her eat coleslaw sandwiches
And taught her how to dive.

At school she was terrified of sarcastic teachers
With their quick accusations
But secretly she admired Moana who did the "death drop"
On the jungle gym
With no hands.

The attention of boys at school always puzzled her
Yet she was a romantic at heart
Composing songs of desire
On the branch of her favourite tree.

Tania likes to watch the moon
Turning orange as a mandarin
Over a gleaming ocean
As she melts chocolates in her soft mouth.

She draws private pictures
In serpentine patterns
And paints the glass
Of mirrors blue.

Despite her teachers' expectations,
Tania became an evolutionary biologist
Fascinated by where things came from
So that she no longer feared where things might go.

Deborah Fraser

OTOROHANGA, 1966

After nearly a year at school
I ran away
With my girlfriend for security

We shuffled nonchalantly
Across the empty zebra
Our hearts thundering
Our hands clasped
The bird bones of our fingers
Straining starkly in our breathless daring.

We made only two streets
Before the school was alerted.

I marvelled at all the room
In the back of the headmaster's car
Smooth leather seats on which my legs dangled
The back of his black-grey head
Lacquered tight and shiny.

In the midst of his lecture
The bold school gates
Marking our return.

Expelled from the car
I gazed back at those seats
Closing the heavy black door behind me.

Deborah Fraser