

1986

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Recommended Citation

McPherson, Sandra. "Maureen Morris, Mother of Five, Eats a Pansy from the Garden of a Fancy Restaurant in Aspen." *The Iowa Review* 16.1 (1986): 86-86. Web.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3306>

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Maureen Morris, Mother of Five, Eats a Pansy
From the Garden of a Fancy Restaurant
in Aspen · *Sandra McPherson*

I don't know what she'd been saying about her life—
at lunch we all shared,
pasts, minor points of minor histories, but oh
if we hadn't been chosen to live them . . .
My detail told about a child
reeling, first time drunk, swimming
to her parents' ankles, reaching out
like a mystic gripping roots
to make it down
a steep trail to the river.

Maureen pictured us deserving better—
Carol, Ava, Lolly, the mothers—
deserving to choose what we give birth to.
And why, even, does it have to be human?
Why not that nodding purple avens in Hallam's march,
eyelid flower turning to feathers?
Why not a green bog orchid
more after our own kind?

And so we are waiting: it is not too late
to give birth to a flower,
never an irreconcilable seed.
Maureen heads between full tables
to a free purple face wholly open,
adopts it with a snap and eats,
passes it around our table,
does this in noon light, one bite
for each child we conceived in the dark.