



KARI GUNTER-SEYMOUR

Oh You Woman of Appalachia

how they work to keep you down,
call you fat, shoeless,
say you have no teeth.

But you got teeth, plenty.
Ask any city man thinking to park
his fracking machines in your valley.
And the earth responds,
rewards you in petals,
herbs, sweet potato vines.

And yes we know, one good fiddle lick
makes you forget tired or hungry,
and yes that is your voice
strong and true, front row of the choir
come Sunday morning, slipping
more than you ought in the donation box,
because you cannot bear to think
of any of your neighbors going without.

Generation to generation,
childhood to womanhood,
failing crops and dying children,
the mine siren's doom.
Your sorrows like echoes
rippling through the holler
and entered with careful cursive
in the family Bible.

So when they call you soft, I say,
You are not soft.
You are limestone.
You are flint.
You are mountain shine,
feed-sack proud.
You are diamond.