

THE ALEWIVES' WARNING

In Manhattan, where it is never dark,
The artificial sun went dead.
Mechanical winds ceased to blow
and people discovered again
that those vestigial organs dangling from hips
could still be used to take themselves down
their forty-storied
Rapunzel towers.

From Texas to North Dakota
earth's skin
lay cracked and powdered,
corn maidens shriveled
to barren crones
strong men watched their
cattle dying for want of fodder
and cried.

From Fire Island to Cape May
Where porpoises once cavorted
and sun Adonises lay
prostrate in worship,
a deadly flotsam,
the sludge of greed
and short-term profit
washed ashore.

In the 1970s the alewives
washed down with the shipping lanes
in Lake Michigan,
their dull eyes staring up from the dunes
wherever you stepped.
Is this the way the world ends?

~Sheila D. Collins

