

Elaine Equi

## MAPLE

Leave me alone with a jug of this syrup and who knows what maple mayhem I'll get into.

Once someone asked me for my favorite word. I wanted to say "malice" but that sounded too mean, so I gave them "maple."

It did the trick—totally threw them off the scent of my aggression.

But I honestly do love maple, with its high-pitched sweetness, so piercing only a dog can hear it.

The taste speaks to some darkness deep in my soul where a sleepwalker stands bathed in the light of an open refrigerator, swigging the sticky amber, like bourbon, straight from the bottle.

"I am drinking the blood," she chants. "I am drinking the blood of the forest."

## LISTENING TO NPR

Is like overhearing the adults  
in another room speak rationally  
no matter what the crisis.

When I was a child they never did that—  
preferred to curse or sing,  
occasionally shatter things.

Now old, I enjoy being lulled  
by a make-believe world  
where every encounter begins and ends with,

“Thank you for coming.  
Thank you for having me.”



Elaine Equi's books include *Sentences and Rain*, *Ripple Effect: New and Selected Poems*, and most recently, *The Intangibles* (all from Coffee House Press). Widely published and anthologized, her work has appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Court Green*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, and in many editions of the *Best American Poetry*. She teaches at New York University and in the MFA Program in Creative Writing at The New School.