

## Julia Alvarez's "Heroics" (May, 1982)

We keep coming to this part  
of the story where we're sad:  
I've broken up with my true love  
man after man.  
You've found It; 5  
Once, It was god.  
Once, revolution  
In the third world.  
Now, It's love.

*You'll survive*, our mothers said 10  
when romance was once.  
Now they keep tight faces  
for our visits home  
And tell their friends  
all that education 15  
has confused us,  
all those poems.

They have, we laugh,  
And buy the dreams—  
*Redbook, House Beautiful,* 20  
*Mademoiselle & Vogue*—  
To read our stories in them  
And send the clippings home.  
Sometimes the bright chase  
Of ad lovers in a meadow set 25  
Sells us to belief again  
In that worn plot of love . . .

Sadly, we turn the page  
to right our hearts,  
knowing our lives too well 30  
to be the heroines  
of our mothers' stories.  
We're careful with the words  
we pick, the loves with no returns  
like the ones we wanted. 35  
Aunts to our sisters' boys,  
we bring them squawking rubber monsters,  
birthday poems pasted in the growing albums.