

Tula “Books are door-shaped”

By Margarita Engle

Books are door-shaped
portals
carrying me
across oceans
and centuries,
helping me feel
less alone.

But my mother believes
that girls who read too much
are unladylike
and ugly,
so my father's books are locked
in a clear glass cabinet. I gaze
at enticing covers
and mysterious titles,
but I am rarely permitted
to touch
the enchantment
of words.

Poems.

Stories.

Plays.

All are forbidden.

Girls are not supposed to think,
but as soon as my eager mind
begins to race, free thoughts
rush in

to replace
the trapped ones.

I imagine distant times
and faraway places.

Ghosts.

Vampires.

Ancient warriors.

Fantasy moves into
the tangled maze
of lonely confusion.

Secretly, I open
an invisible book in my mind,
and I step
through its magical door-shape
into a universe
of dangerous villains
and breathtaking heroes.

Many of the heroes are men
and boys, but some are girls
so tall
strong
and clever
that they rescue other children
from monsters.