

Beth Spencer

## Blood Ties

We are a family of fainters.  
No blue bloods.  
Perhaps a touch of the tar.  
Deep veins, elusive.

(The acupuncture professor  
looking embarrassed as he  
tries again to find my pulse.)  
Mosquitoes love us.

Not a dramatic family,  
except for the fainting.  
The beat of the heart  
slow and steady.

Cuts that are slow to heal.  
Easy bruising as we  
bang into each other.  
(Best avoid, slice it thin.)

I imagine an ancestor  
at Culloden,  
witnessing  
so much blood.

The life draining out,  
but saved at the last  
to go home and  
father a new sprout.

Or was it an ancestor  
in the Australian bush —  
so much blood  
at the site of a massacre.

(Which side?)  
Seared into the brain,  
spiked into every cell,  
passed on in the veins.

It is the talk of blood  
that does it.