Helicopters

_Elinor Benedict_

_Poronui Fishing Ranch, New Zealand_

From the meadow pool we watch
the helicopter come and go, carrying
from lodge to more distant streams
other couples in leather and canvas
who pay dearly to catch rare trout
none of us will keep.

The land rolls out
its green carpet, checkered with tree farms,
threaded with rivers and wooly fields
that Kiwi people call the bush, where
bees hum in white _tamuka_ blooms
to make a honey so fine that
hospitals here swear by
its healing.

But how long will it take
even in this valley of pleasure to hear
a chopper’s blasting rattle without
seeing fire, red gape of wounds,
desperate hurry, life wasting?
Even here, sounds and images
of war endure.

I stop untangling my line
from tamuka, drop my rod and hold
my ears against the noise, trying to
think instead of luckiness—old age
escorting my husband and me
with all honeyed comfort and delay
to a death just as certain as the one
that casts war’s helicopters
into air, fishing for men.