That Country

By Grace Paley

This is about the women of that country
Sometimes they spoke in slogans
They said
  We patch the roads as we patch our sweetheart’s trousers
  The heart will stop but not the transport
They said
  We have ensured production even near bomb craters
  Children let your voices sing higher than the explosions
  of the bombs
They said
  We have important tasks to teach the children
  that the people are the collective masters
  to bear hardship
  to instill love in the family
  to guide the good health of the children (they must
  wear clothing according to climate)
They said
  Once men beat their wives
  now they may not
  Once a poor family sold its daughter to a rich old man
  now the young may love one another
They said
  Once we planted our rice any old way
  now we plant the young shoots in straight rows
  so the imperialist pilot can see how steady our
  hands are

In the evening we walked along the shores of the Lake
  of the Restored Sword

I said  is it true?  we are sisters?
They said  Yes, we are of one family