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
