

Ren K. Powell

View from an Island

I am a Russian Doll
now—that doesn't matter:
Land within land,
heart of a Navajo.

Sacred painting's
yellow ochre,
my skirt
trimmed with lichen.

Eyes like a lighthouse,
these ambiguous beacons:
Something is lost
crossing the heather:

the craggy beauty
of an old woman's throat,
the mellow man's joy—
brief, repeating.

Something is lost
to the morning's mackerel
as they slap *Halleluiah*
Halleluiah

at the soles of my feet.
To journey on the backs
of fishes, to follow
the boats to England—

But to wait,
a core of bog-burned oak
paganishly burnished
by a fisherman's will...

Spinster's Shroud

She has fashioned for herself
a gown
 of hollowed egg shells
and white thread.

She has taken from the clasp and string
her great-grandmother's pearls
and arranged the four hundred sixty eight
 fawn moonscapes
to hang in their stead.

An undergarment of ivy,
 woven to lift the dry shells
 from her naked collarbones,
is interwoven with the wild orchids
that adorn the bodice.

The crinoline is formed of dried bundles
of bugleweed, saved from midsummer picking—
 eight times in youth,
and twenty-seven times
 since.

She has trimmed the hem with holly.
A train of evergreen.

She saves for the last
 to tie the knot.

Breaking the thread with her teeth,
sliding the needle into the cushion,
leaving open the door
 to the coop.

Nymph

That fall she slept among the blueberry
and heather tangles. Waking when her limbs
had ripened to force a protest from her bed—
snapping branches stabbing through her visions.
Years from now he will excuse himself—
find comfort repeating his version: how she
approached him, naked, full of questions,
her green scent a curiosity.

Sunday Afternoon

After lunch, Eirik and I
Long underwear, scarves—clothes
for ski-ing weekends, not for little walks
around the lake.

We cut through the pasture
letting the dog off the leash to play tag for a while.
Then downhill, through the trees,
slipping on ice-covered crevasses in the stone.

Sweating by the time we get to the lake
The dog too tired to chase the ducks.
Eirik is dropping rocks through the ice—
shattering semi-circles

skipping ice over ice—like stones
spinning echoes:
waaooaaoo, waaooaaoo

cold volcanoes erupt
trapped air under the surface
circles of white

Glass shards bouncing on the timpani drum

The frozen lake sings and it's four in the afternoon.
A slipping sun splashes pink on the mountain's snow.

The Rape

Homolateral movements:
dragging itself over stone,
slick bed of kelp,
a body—it looks remarkably human
while pinning a limb
beneath its own

And the lizard
blends so goddamned well
with its environment
it takes more than the whisper
of a frantic pinion
to call attention