

Claire Cowan-Barbetti

PRESENT

Who knew that nestled,
Hid within the center
Of the galloping ambit of
The spring's manic urge
That forces the fluttering of girls' eyelids,
The rise and fall of young breasts
Heaved to rumbling dreams of birds and roots,
Rose colored beads, flanks of muscle, and a strand of hair;
That poses a destination jolting and incomplete
To the gait of virile, laughing, tanned men;
A glamour laced on the rim of the wine glass
Snaking through restless lips;
Of looking for the sun to move
And the high full moon to
Incense the wind's wandering and wildness through
Veins, bones, organs, blood;
When this fire is filled up with fuse
And the path lies packed dry and beaten
Lies a tender peace
Warm and waiting,
Potent like a precious egg?

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LOT'S WIFE: AN IMAGE

When you were torn from your home
In blazes and set upon a dry, frantic path
What spirit circled you
As you turned your tears toward
Memory and distinction?

If your eyes focused
On that tree there
Ten paces from your door
That bloomed the day you were given
In marriage to a man you hardly knew
Or on the southern wall of your home
On which you leaned after a day's work
And trusted that the length
Of your child's sleeping body
Rested against its cool inside
Your pupils drew upon these things with purpose

That one last look would be
Looking last.

With care, you knew you offended:
Your sight would not find Zoar--
Why were you not obliterated from the earth?

Transmogrified woman,
Salted earth and Salt-of-the-earth,
Your body became the cataract we discerned as your eye,
Adumbration of the flowing mystery.
Did the Spirit mock you as you yearned
Or bid you thus changed and worded as a clue?