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?