

MOLLY BASHAW

Posing Nude for Andrew Wyeth

The old wagon became a sexual being

reminding of its history as trees, the wood steamed
and giving way, the wood measured by hands, turned
on a lathe, the wood fitted and driven into place,
the axle under the breast still lithe, the tongue still reaching out for a team.

■

The sweet bright black flesh of earth
was an ear we listened to

as it listened.

Are you speaking of us, we asked.

In it a scent of rope and garments, carob, the threshing machine.

We held the reins, the fences held the fields' hands,
in them the scent of eggshells, fish, the sea.

Leather stretched taut rubbed on the bit,
the britchen, the bells.
The furrow rushed over
our feet, a wave of sepia milk,

in it the scent of ink and beaks,

the voice of the sky,
the voice of the ground,
the voice of the sky,
the voice of the ground.

O raven, O blackbird, O crow,
we only accused you of what we also were.

■

The honey and the onions spoke:

I am wrapped in my own skin.
I am wrapped low down, around a branch of oak.

I rise up from underground, drawn by the sun.
I was celebrated before they took the comb.

I cast a reddish, purplish hue.
I have been eaten by animals quickly, bursting with bees.

Drying on barn boards, you'd think I was a group of forgotten travelers.
In those hexagons there is perfect memory.

Unwrapping me you might expect a center.
I am a tent built around the scent of a small queen's body.

I am pages of water.
I connect the buckwheat blossoms to each other.

■

Yes, said the grass body,
I carry my psalm in your palm.

■

The logging scoot
used in spring to drag
woods to the mills:

its big wood thighs—pale in that sunlight
that snuck through darkest branches—
pinned together and chained up, the peavey
driven in to rest there,

it told the story of body weight,
dragging nights through mud,

an image we hitched ourselves to and pulled,
an image that pulled us,
an image we hitched ourselves to and pulled,
an image that pulled us.

Though the cord of chopped wood spoke two languages,
one of silver maple trees, one of fire,

it was the language of the stove that saved us,

the iron house,
the ashes we carried from it,

that rocking chair.

■

The doors to the barn were never completely shut, propped
from swinging open by a board, the old wood sagging
and the hinges bent, a wreath of wind in the rafters. The sound
of snow on the roof said to the mouse, fox, or tramp who'd slipped in
through those cracks and found grain and nested in the eaves;

the sound of snow
on the roof said to anyone who listened:

no one possesses the kingdom of dust.

■

A punt in the field quietly went to pieces,
a rowboat next to the grain silo,
one oar left, took on moss, letting go,
a dory tucked into the eaves of the barn
floated on the sun coming into the hay in the loft
like bright green seawater,

though the only water for miles around
was in the spring-fed trough
and in the spring itself.

The horses shifted their weight to different hooves,
the cat knocked over a clay pot

to the gale of barn swallows.

Rows of old silken women
on the winter cornfield
smiled their two-toothed cobs,

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they held brown flags, mauve and beige flags.

The train rushed past.
They said, You are that strong.
The tassels moved in the wind,
singing want

is a delicacy, always, further—
Bear witness.