

# Windows

By Linda Bierds

When the cow died by the green sapling,  
her limp udder splayed on the grass  
like something from the sea, we offered  
our words in their low calibrations—  
which was our fashion—then severed  
her horns with a pug-toothed blade  
and pounded them out to an amber  
transparency, two sheets that became,  
in their moth-wing haze, our parlor windows.  
They softened our guests with the gauze-light  
of the Scriptures, and rendered to us,  
on our merriest days, the sensation  
of gazing through the feet of a gander.  
In time we moved up to the status  
of glass—one pane, then two—each  
cupping in proof of its purity  
a dimple of fault, a form of distortion  
enhancing our image. We took the panes  
with us from cottage to cottage,  
moth-horn and glass, and wedged up  
the misfitted gaps with a poultice  
of gunny and wax. When woodsmoke  
darkened our bricks, we gave  
to the windowsills a lacquer  
of color—clear blue with a lattice  
of yellow: a primary entrance and exit  
for light. And often, walking home  
from the river and small cheese shop,  
we would squint their colors to a sapling  
green, and remember the hull  
of that early body, the slap of fear  
we suffered there, then the little wash  
of recovery that is our fashion—how  
we stroked to her bones a cadenced droning,  
and took back from her absence, our  
amber, half-literal method of sight.

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Born in Delaware, Linda Bierds lived in Anchorage until she was seven. She attended both undergraduate and graduate school at the University of Washington, where she is a professor and director of the creative writing program. Her current residence is on Bainbridge Island, located in the Central Puget Sound Basin. She is the author of seven volumes of poetry and appears regularly in *The New Yorker*. She has won several major awards and grants including the Guggenheim and the “genius” grant from the MacArthur Foundation.

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