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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