

Loretta Diane Walker

Descent

*Are you in love with these rivers and hills?
~ "Questions for the Moon" by Ho Xuan Huong*

Moon, who knows the weight of time,
how day falls into night?
If now is a paperclip, staple, hill?
Does it drift like a river?
Does it understand devotion?
What name have you given it?

Who can explain the daunting heaviness
of an "I" in search of seed and harvest?
To know when to quit, dig, wait—
jasmine-air is on her knees,
a prayer offering to earth
and the soft melody of solitude?
When to celebrate owls whooping
in the wide torn sleeve of darkness?
How long is the epic of lack?

Yesterday evening was a half-crazed,
fully-famished coyote.
Its dried dusty tongue stabbed,
striking stone and bramble,
at remnants of moisture.

Gray anorexic clouds spat
on the city with scattered showers.
Overnight, they grew fat
with extra water weight.

Millions of wet crumbs descended
from the overstrained sky.
Like a coyote, I howled with happiness,
while lack and moon vanished
behind the small hissing of time.

The Colors of Want

My eyes, brown telescopes, focus
on a Vermont brochure. Peacock trees feather hues
of ginger, harvest, crimson leaves across a slick page.
I wish autumn was sleeping on my chest.
I wish I could go to Stowe, smell the fire-colored horizon.
Taste the air beneath a blood-struck sky.

I'm stuck in this green March day,
shamrockless, no hint of Irish in my blood.
A pot of words the gold at the end of my rain-softened hill.
Still might buy a lotto ticket after I leave this white,
white room of stirrups, plastic gloves, probing nurse.
I won't complain about waiting for the doctor.
Kat's daughter was air-lifted to Lubbock two days ago.
Her brain dammed with blood.

Gratitude's a leprechaun.
I know the luck of surviving pricks
of needles, prodding of hands, the pestering.
I know a telescope *makes distant objects appear nearer,*
the iris *adjusts the amount of light reaching the retina.*
I know the science of wanting
those things beyond the reach of painted nails.
To make bright the scumbled shade of longing.

I fan the brochure. Gentle winds of colors blow.

River Stones

clustered like grapes,
a chorus of river stones
sing a wet requiem for summer.

for my thirtieth birthday
I received thirty
of their hard crooning cousins.

huddled together
in a dusty vanilla ice-cream box,
each one bears a blessing in black ink.

I heft one of the singers,
press its rough jagged lifelines
against my smooth ones,

listen for the stone's melody.
it sits in my palm
immersed in silence,

its voice drowning
in the soft dry
folds of my flesh.

Loretta Diane Walker is a three-time Pushcart nominee. She has published three collections of poetry. Her manuscript *Word Ghetto* won the 2011 Bluelight Press Book Award. Loretta was recently named "Statesman in the Arts" by the Heritage Council of Odessa. Walker's work has appeared in numerous publications, most recently *Her Texas*, *River of Earth and Sky: Poems for the Twenty-First Century*, *Texas Poetry Calendar 2016*, *Pushing Out the Boat International Journal*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Illya's Honey*, *Red River Review*, *Diversity: Austin International Poetry Festival*. Loretta teaches music in Odessa, Texas. She received a BME from Texas Tech University and earned a MA from The University of Texas of the Permian Basin. <http://lorettadianewalker.weebly.com/>.