

TRACE

SIMONE MUENCH



Black
Lawrence
Press

Hence, my writing is, if not a cabinet of fossils,
a kind of collection of flies in amber.

—Marianne Moore

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With flowers in their lapels, nine
howling wolves come hungering.
A surge of wet syllables
dangles from their mouths.
Children trace their liquid howl
built out of alien words like seeds
in black earth. A woman's lock
of hair brushes their lips.
Their jaws open—coral
in the darkness. I do not know
who has opened the window.
They sing with their mouths full of earth.
The light is putting on gloves.
No blood is flowing. Just red birds.

Outside the new world winters in grand dark
like a young wolf in its blood leaping
to snap the flower-flake as my shadow
falls broken-legged down stony precipices,
snowflakes falling more blue than subways,
than astronomy—the body-clocks are stopped
all over town. Your finger drawing my mouth.
Sans teeth, sans eyes.

When the mouth dies, who misses you?
The kill of the wolf is the meat of the wolf:
he may do what he will.
Inside the wolf's tongue, the doe's tears.
It was wet & we licked the hollow
where a hare could hide.

Who will take the madness from the trees?
The petals of dead planets broken.
What do they matter now, the deprivations.

Your voice will never recover
what was said once, so when you hold
the hemisphere & once more take up the world,

I can see myself in you as though I were sitting
in a beautiful wound. I drink from your footprint
& see: a red wolf strangled by an angel

against the immeasurable sun. This terrifying
world is not devoid of charms—
the poppy that no girl's finger has opened,

farmhouses dark against a sublime blue,
an airplane whistling from the other world.
In the distance someone is singing. In the distance

a slow, sweet song crowded with floating animals
& small artifacts: bell jar, honeycomb, revolver.
Can we describe the world this way—

with stars & bullet holes? A presence or its contrary?
Like dizzy horses that dissolve into a dust of sheen,
I pass through them as they pass through me.

Very quick. Very intense, like a wolf
at a live heart, the sun breaks down.
What is important is to avoid
the time allotted for disavowals
as the livid wound
leaves a trace leaves an abscess
takes its contraction for those clouds
that dip thunder & vanish
like rose leaves in closed jars.
Age approaches, slowly. But it cannot
crystal bone into thin air.
The small hours open their wounds for me.
This is a woman's confession:
I keep this wolf because the wilderness gave it to me.

Sea-blue, shot through
with the echo of a shadow
that sleeps after its voyage,

she sat with wolves & magicians
in a corner of an empty house
& saw someone coming

through the whirling snow
like a reflection from arson,
emitting sparks, shaking

the air as if to remind her
of the animal life.

A word, a whisper says this

in the dark: you are feverishly hot.

Forest stands behind forest.

Under your skins you have

other skins; you have a seventh
sense. Don't you hear
the sky ping above your eye?

All of us are rain
under rain, noon spin
through bright meridian.

Mind drawn on, drawn out
like a little boat bringing
the flame from the other shore.