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WIOLETTA GREG

ALL ABOUT MY GRANDMOTHER

Wheat daughter, prisoner of sneaky pigweed, mother
to the five corners of the world and your three hectares,
beak-nosed carpenter’s wife and the potter’s lover,
queen of the aroma of grey soap, head covered
with a gold-trimmed kerchief, the glory of birds at dawn,
tired liege of furrowed fields, midwife to our breads,
magic purveyor of spirit and rye, protector of cabbages,
you who brought ripe Augusts deep into the barn,
warrior woman feared and hated by all local cats,
nurse of the sour leaven in our stone house,
air-starved Medusa twirling your gnarled fingers,
threading us together like slices of pear,
comely Selenite glaring through bulging eyes,
our dark diviner, your neck a heavy lump of thyroid,
all around me I can still see your patterned skirts,
seven tightly-wound growth rings,
sleepwalker catching gasps through cracks in sleep,
in the dining room, the stove, on the porch and in the well,
mother nailed to the cross of your marriage bed,
abandoned mistress and bitter-sweet slave
of old tunes, superstitions and beliefs,
dear Nan, relentless flirt, dark willow,
forever invading my thoughts and verses,
hourglass, book of old words and worlds
with your cracked collarbone sail on
forever down that colourless river.