

HELEN WALKER

Cornerstone

(Tracting in New Mexico)

With vivid cunning
she draws rounded
petals of smoke
within her mouth,
crosses a bony knee
and speaks
of converting
other Lamanites.
Eve, too,
was a brunette.
And from this tender mouth
rings the laughter
of a girl,
a vessel of the fruitful earth.
*My body is
occupied
by sin,
she says, laughing.
I know because
the holy spirit
told me.
The devil is a molten ball.
I dreamed of
Catherine of Siena
as a child.*

*Endless nights, Father.
White flowers
bursting into flame
at my bedside:
a sign.
Pierced through
the heart with
a sharpened candlestick.
I come, penitent.*

Sundays
laid out before me,
fresh sheets
drying upon
the grass
with rocks
at their corners.
Parted lips
are among
my eternal
burdens.
How much
do you wish
for this naked hallway,
this remorse?