

The Pioneer Woman, St. George

Kevin Klein

She brought her family to this god-
forsaken place at His request.
She will petition until He reconsiders
and crops cover the reproach
of a roiling red valley where
not a single tree grows.

Only yesterday they unhitched the team,
unloaded the wagon, pitched the tent.
Everything they lack is exactly
what they'll ask Him with. Is faith.

Tomorrow begins the digging, cutting,
carting water in leaky, too-small buckets
from streams they've already named and prayed for
to last through summer.

All day, heat waves conjured the mirage
or vision of oases, towns, a promised land
that will flourish through His covenants
and hers.

The late sun glares
across a horizon of gray sagebrush.
The woman shields her solemn
brown and green-flecked eyes
from the past, its poverty and riches.
Shields them from this sunset,
squints but doesn't blink
until the bushes flame, until she too
is afire and not consumed.