

*Penitent Magdalene, Donatello**Anita Tanner*

Shock of aging
in a wooden sculpture—
more than years
displayed here,
her gaunt
and weathered face
portraying time had its way—
sunken eyes,
broken teeth,
parched and haggard lips.

The cathedral
of her hands
forms a gothic arch
below her chin
suggesting prayer,
her frail body embraced
by heavy strands
of hair ropes
forming a belt
around her waist, cascading
all the way down her
elongated torso, a frayed
shawl once enfolding
beauty.

She's given all that up
to a skeletal faith that asks
forgiveness, that pleads
through her veins, grains

of white poplar, for
nourishment beyond time,
beyond the sculptor's art
breathing into soft,
striated wood the praise
and passion of deep
change, the crucible
of new life,
the oxygen
of sacrifice.

ANITA TANNER {anitatanner6@gmail.com} was raised on a small family farm in Star Valley, Wyoming, where she learned the value of hard work and a love of the land, nature, and animals. Tanner began writing a few months before the birth of her fifth child. She, her husband, and six children made their home in Utah, later moving to Colorado. After her husband's death in 2002, Tanner moved to Boise, Idaho. Writing and reading for her is akin to breathing.