

Portrait of Agnes

Sarah Emmett

Stern little lady,
ancestor in an oval frame,
I like the way your shoulders slope
and your fingers dangle
over the book and the carpetbag skirt.
I like the way your widow's peak disrupts
your white forehead,
your pink cheeks through the black and white.
I like the way your braids loop
above your collar and your necklace.
Tell me, what color was your hair?

They told me stories about how you walked,
how you skipped through a rattlesnake path,
how you sprinted through the snowy autumn prairie
and kept all of your toes.
But, my pretty pioneer,
I'd rather know what book you are holding,
and how your thin frown looks when you laugh.