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My Mother's Ghost

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MY MOTHER'S GHOST

Judith Harris

From behind the rift of dreamy shadow,
I see her cross the garden's line,
and then alight on the birch's minor limb,
with its bark sloughed off and paper thin, and there
she spreads her topaz wings,
like a tiny drop cloth, and fixes
on the purple hyacinth, her kite string legs
black as a man's moustache, her pinions pressed
as two palms in statue prayer.

And here, I stop to watch her
on her morning task, a nibbling
on a bronzed green leaf,
so absorbed in her matter, she hardly flaps
or turns to notice me,
but instead, she stays still as stone,
her snowflake sleeves opening and closing,
as a book breaking its spine.

Then all at once, she changes course,
sails scampering into the distant sky,
suddenly metamorphosed, back
into a haze of fog, the woosack cloud,
a miner's path with her lamp held up,
like a darkness lost without a flame.