

Daniel Mills

## Icon

Pray to this morning doe—  
her eyes: two radiant black madonnas  
bestowing grace from bramble

on the trail below the hermitage;  
her body: a sanctuary of expectant stillness  
that clearly wasn't anticipating the prickly thorn of me—

a young monk scavenging,  
gathering, like her, these silent morsels of daybreak  
onto the animal hunger of the tongue.

What icon, holy as it is, can compare  
with the rapt gaze of this?—  
the dawn-lit vigil lamps of our faces

burning, one before the other;  
mist rising like incense as she slips,  
a white-robed tail vanishing,

quiet as a chapel, into these deeper vows  
she's made to scrub oak and parsnip,  
woodbine and salal.

The wild apple of her heart beating  
toward the hidden cloisters of owls,  
the secret shrines they tuck, chanting, into the trees.