

Dryad
Thea Calitri-Martin

I first noticed her on my way to work
About ten years ago
Standing by the side of the road
At seven fifteen in the morning

Keeping company with the maples
That lined the meadow's edge
Too old to be tapped
They gave her sparse shade

I watched for her every day
Intuiting her story
She was always looking
In the same direction, down the road

Her posture was uncompromising
She wore a shawl clutched close
As if she had been about to walk
Down the hill for a hundred years

She showed her face in profile
Sharp nose, hair in a bun
A teacher, like me
Greeting the fresh challenges of morning

In winter her head and shoulders
Bore white weight without concern
In spring and summer she ignored
Disturbances of manure spreaders and haying

I found in her unyielding stance
A spirit reaching through generations
The passage of time could change but
Not erase her purpose, or mine

Last spring the farmer cleared the meadow's edge
Her stump snapped, she disappeared under a brush pile
I missed my prompt for morning musings
And mourned a landmark lost

After three seasons the brush is gone
She has reappeared with a new silhouette
Back turned, she now looks away from the road
Her face cannot be seen

Instead of clutching her shawl
She raises one arm triumphant
Saluting the power to persevere
Keeping watch on the meadow