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Richard William Pearce

Cape Cod Evening

(from the painting by Edward Hopper)

The woman leans back against the house.
She's pale and run to fat: her wrists are bloated,
gut sags to pubic line, breasts are supported only by
the forearms crossed underneath.
Beneath the woman's dress, her heavy thighs
are tight together, guarding the only thing she owns
that the man still finds of value. She has never "made love,"
and hasn't fucked since shortly after they met.
Sex steals her control, thus isn't allowed.
She doesn't fear he'll search elsewhere.

The man sits on his stoop. He's thin and tanned,
walks the beach alone and is reduced to masturbating
in the nearby grove of locust trees. There's always a kind of
night
in their shade. He buries the days at their roots.
At times he dreams he's a stone in the soil,
or a mole who burrows away from its life.
He dreams of existing without having to exist.

Around the house lies yellowed grass,
Parched with mold-blue and grown to such a height
that it conceals the legs of the collie.
A handsome animal, quick, alert,
he's admired by the couple, but
the woman never shows this.
She offers the dog no affection,
presently won't even look directly at him.

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She watches from the corners of her eyes.
The man leans forward with the usual weary countenance
and snaps the fingers of an extended hand,
hoping the collie will come; but a different thing's heeded,
maybe a whippoorwill or a chirping frog.
Facing away from the couple, the collie stands motionless,
ears up, tail out. A breeze caresses his fur,
ripples the grass against his belly.

The man, bunched up and still leaning forward
as if suffering from painful constipation, snaps, snaps, snaps,
snaps...

The woman grows angry at the collie
without knowing why; yet is pleased, secretly,
that the man is failing.

The collie listens intently,
while blocking out the snapping.
There is too much else the evening offers,
too many beautiful Cape Cod songs
and fascinating scents.

The man and woman
do not matter.