

Wilderness House Literary Review 15/4

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Ways of Seeing

When you wake in the middle of the night
and fumble to find the light switch,
imagine a blind girl
holding a facsimile bust of Nefertiti.

See her fingers,
wide awake,
trace the face
of the ancient queen;
study the curves, read
the cheekbones
with her small thumbs,
as if to sculpt
the image in her mind.
She grasps the elegant nose,
the regal chin thrust outward,
the plunging neck.
What does she see?

Imagine the girl's mother
standing beside her,
one hand on her daughter's shoulder,
the other over her mouth
as the girl's hands move
to her own face:
round cheeks, small jaw,
wide-set eyes she's
been told are blue.
Her hands return
to Nefertiti,
Then back and forth
she compares
these two human hieroglyphs.

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Now picture the girl
standing next to the Queen
in a throne room somewhere
past Cairo.

Dark charcoal panes
ring their eyes as
side by side
they worship a sun
the girl can only feel.

Removing her hands
from the bust,
the girl leaves the gallery,
walks ahead of her mother,
chin out
and shoulders down:
a royal bearing.