

Medusa, Experiencing Activist Burnout

Honorable Mention for the Michael and Gail Gurian Awards Poetry Prize

I once learned that snakes don't have eyelids.
I think that's why the mythmakers chose
these beasts for me. Unable to stop seeing
the muddy hands of calloused and unwanted
men perform pirouettes in sacred spaces,
I am damned with remembrance.

There was a time in antiquity when I rioted
with others crumbled by fate, cut men
into effigies of rock and fire, looked the gods
in the face and spit on their thrones. I drained
myself of venom only to discover oceans
of power aren't phased by pebbles or sparks.

I braid my hair into serpents these days,
pinning back the parts of me that bite
with black bows. I do not want to use
the evil they forced upon me. I am
too tired of the fruitlessness of my own
rage to unleash the hell I hold.

Some nights, when it's just myself and the mirror,
I unravel. I let the animals hiss, dance, snap
at one another. They search the room for men
to strip of beating hearts, to turn to stone.