

MARGARET GIBSON

Carve a Wooden Spool

Imagine looking into the future, or the past,
as if either were a dying sun. Out in the salt marsh

imagine a torso by Phidias. Imagine
Monet's cathedral, *Rouen at Dawn*, floating face up

in the Shetucket. Imagine a heron in polluted water,
a root wad of lightning in the sky,

the shadow of a bottle fly on a window tinted red.
Smoke nests in the trees—or is that smog, low-down

in the mud, where the river was?
Imagine the eagle, its head and forked eye sculpted

into the floor of an earth mound above the flood plain,
beside the sacred fire. Imagine drum.

You say you pass too easily in and out of life
and death—and you don't much care

which you inhabit. You say your own life
is a sentence you cannot say. Your hands,

trembling at your throat, taught you this.
Imagine *Moses the Panther*, feral wooden haunches

prowling through glitter as if glitter were power, raw.
Its shooter-marble eyes

don't match—no way to think they could,
or should. Even in the art museum, they're wild.

Go deeper into the madness. Imagine
Duck in High Fashion Stockings in the Snow.

From O.L. Samuels, who carved them, learn
this charm—*Carve a wooden spool,*

his grandmother's refuge, her remedy
for the vertigo of *nothing-left-to-lose*. For an animal,

habitat is no longer given; for a human,
it has to be salvaged. Out in the salt marsh,

like an abandoned duck blind, imagine a marble head
wreathed in laurel. Imagine a rough-legged hawk.

Imagine step-pool. Ocelot. Wetland. Lark.
Wood, now obsolete, once meant *insane*. Imagine

carving a wooden spool, looking
into the future, or the past, as if either were a dying sun.