

Becky Birtha · The woman in Buffalo
is given to waiting

She neglects her work.
English ivy rust on the sill.
The linen goes unwashed.
The poems do not get written.

The woman has no companion,
She has no man.
She neglects her friends —
If they were to come to her house
They would not find her
 waiting
 for them.

The waiting focuses:
The center of the morning
Pulls her taut,
Holds her still until she
Hears
 the iron lid drop
 against the iron box
Descends the stair to retrieve
 letters that will
 receive no reply —
 snapped into a rubber band.

 the one she awaited did not come
 if there were such a one.
She returns to her kitchen
Draws herself in to continue.

The woman in Buffalo
Will make an art of waiting
in which she will achieve perfection
She will invest her strength in waiting
dense as a massive brown mountain,
go still and solid like a stone.
She will grow into waiting
Like an oak into an iron fence.