

Ballerina at the Potter's Wheel

by Lisa Oram

Like a fist, her long body
wraps around the spinning clay. Her thighs
press tight against the plastic basin
that fills with water and flying scraps, one foot
tucked under her, the other steady on the pedal.
She could be kissing the clay.
The clay could be singing in her ear.
As if she could will the strength of her feet,
her shins, her knees and her hips into the crater of her belly,
into her shoulders and down each arm
into each hand, she closes her eyes:
the palm of one hand presses the clay
into the round bent cup of the other hand
whose fingers yield a fraction-of-an-inch.
She pushes the clay into a cone, then flattens its tip,
over and over until the wobbling mass becomes stouter,
more smooth in her new potter's hands.
She learns again about drill and practice,
the welcome trance that finally comes,
the faraway place the mind settles when the body insists.
On the rise, this time, the pressure is long,
the clay thins and suddenly she is vertical,
shoulders high, face to the ceiling, her hair
hanging straight down to almost the floor.
In her hand, a lump
of dissident clay; in her mouth laughter,
as big as she was small,
a moment before.

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