

BETSY FAGIN

Going to Mars alone

will be all of us,
the fishes and fish-keepers
their honorifics, the praise givers,
the shrine-goers, the sick and tired
tied to the ground. Tires elevate us
through sky heaven water cyclone
spiral up from parched earth, praise be,
shorts-wearing guards arm the border
enforce periphery: us and them.

Gutted shirtless, bystanders
ice onlookers wandering near
the quest gates for faith long gone
dropping delicately down
through the dry earth.
All that's wet will be frozen,

once plowed fields scorched,
all water wends its way into glass
against the sequined sky.
My nations present
self-representation:
taking it to the gods,
demanding squat.

Lion hearted
frame upon frame,
our animal friends witness
tilling the soil, as encamped
emperors fly on horseback
like every steward of the land:
plow, toil, my back a plague
of frogs, fish, locusts—sore and old—
all come to the watering hole
where our dead are now bones,
our mollusks, our starfish all
that's left of us, old outdated
components, our offerings.