

Elling Woman

For Seamus Heaney

I.

Reckoning bodies in bogs is like
having a beer with history: no cold
order could keep the kept complete
and leaning toward our meeting.
She's an animal that never
ventured a swim; to pace pausing
waters alone, so she rose the
sullied earth to a truer calling.
She's in safekeeping now. Once,
she curdled milk, dishes, made
labor and flavored the steaks by
potato. Trained in interrogation,
a warm spring day saw her wander
to the river alone to wash some
clothes. So much good use, but never
goddess until she held, again.

II.

We should have gone back that
summer, years later, to make
amends. That April I lived in the
bogs and studied your poems
with little to show. We could have
told her story, instead, we took
what little jewelry was left in there;
little use to pawn back home.

III.

When the tread of spade felt
bedrock, we had nothing more to
do but turn back to an isle of eyes
reading lines, shoulders hunched,
showing our defeat. We should
call the police, I said. Instead,

made an escape over the moaning
fog where no one asked questions;
cuddled in a Jutland pub that night
for safekeeping. Since then detectives

keep calling me from different numbers,
twice on the Sabbath. When I answer
I'll say to them what should have been
said long ago: I wasn't involved.
I watched from the hill as big machines
made an excavation I couldn't call off.



After years of combing through legal briefs, John left his job as a paralegal to pursue his passion for poetry. He currently resides in Missoula, MT where he is obtaining an MFA at the University of Montana and is a speechwriter for the University's Vice President for Student Affairs. John has worked for *Ploughshares* and is currently a reader for *CutBank*. In 2011, he was the writer-in-residence at The Inn At The Oaks in Eastham, MA.