

Bog Queen

by Richard Hague

after teaching Seamus Heaney at the Appalachian Writer's Workshop

High on the ridge, I wait under twin
hickories for your coming, speech shaggy

and brogued as these tongues of bark peeling.
But too hot, this day and air, too dry

this baked hill, ledge paved with
sandstone shards chipped by frost

and heat in the seasons' heavings.
Water's two hundred yards down. Dust

spins your absence in the stoked
skirlings of wind. Too dry. Too hot.

Bog queen, here in this upland
August, snapped withes fasten my

need to drought. Your hair flakes
to tinder, crushed bark. But on the flint

and steel of time is struck the tongue
of your fire, an ancient burning,

small flame faint at its core, yet quick
to blaze in the long dry spell of my heart.