

HEX & HOWL

SIMONE MUENCH + JACKIE K. WHITE





www.blacklawrence.com

Executive Editor: Diane Goettel

Chapbook Editor: Kit Frick

Book Design: Amy Freels

Cover Design: Richard Every

Cover Art: "Untitled (Sisters in Fur Coats with Birds)" by Daisy Patton. Used with permission.

Copyright © Simone Muench and Jackie K. White 2021

ISBN: 978-1-62557-017-8

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher: editors@blacklawrencepress.com

Published 2021 by Black Lawrence Press.

Printed in the United States.

Contents

Duologue	I
I.	
Hex & Howl	5
Salt Lick	6
Against Teleology	7
Portrait as Landscape: Dear Dark Garden	8
Department of Brokenness	9
Portrait as Landscape: In This Grim Play	10
Mutations	11
Solve for X	12
Recast	13
Pressed	14
II.	
Self-Portrait Lined by Emily Dickinson	17
Self-Portrait Lined by Alejandra Pizarnik	18
Self-Portrait Lined by Eavan Boland	19
Self-Portrait Lined by Maxine Kumin	20
Self-Portrait Lined by Anna Akhmatova	21
Self-Portrait Lined by Coral Bracho	22
Self-Portrait Lined by Rosario Castellanos	23
III.	
Disclosure	27
Objection	28
Queue	29
Portrait as Landscape: Of Grisly, of Lovely	30

Portrait as Landscape: Not the Fox	31
Portrait as Landscape: Shell Game	32
From a Grimoire	33
Rebuttal	34
Coda	35
Acknowledgments	36

Duologue

(cento with lines from Simone Muench + Jackie K. White)

Let us rewind and revel
that we are women speaking in the dark.

Let the lungs fill till transparent.
Reach, reach, we want to say

with honey and history, and so the girl
feeds the submerged surging:

lacquered, damp and deep pink, pomegranate
underneath an autumn-frosted Florida spring.

In a world sketched on a wing,
it is difficult not to fall under the spell

but we spin in reverse of every old script and cycle.
Amid wreckage, bed of wet petals, the unsaid,

we linger, saying we want more:
the windows are waking us.

l.

Hex & Howl

You studied the orange girls, cinema
gazes, wounded bodies, and angles
that wolves unbend. I looked through the eyes
of chameleons, the nightmare houses they

inhabited with crystalized skins: pebbled
and primordial, shedding their way into
waking. You and I were told to swallow
our hexed howling, refuse the reptilian

and the mammalian, unless it's tame,
you know, cow-eyed, with a roundness eager
for petting. Now we do the refusing; now

we flame in the celluloid dark, a primal
rewinding where the wolf and the lizard
let loose the elemental code to our riling.

Salt Lick

The deer wants to be iris; the iris,
glass, but the glass is a licked orange,
unsalted. All things remain separate—
us, too. All things fill themselves

with longing. Because the glass remains
iris-empty, my hands reach deer-ward,
toward salt lick and cloud, the edge
of field, its horizon of white irises,

petticoat pretty but bleached of color
like orange pith. Bearded blooms
fragile as blown glass. We are less
delicate though also leeches

and licked. A gestalt of raw.
Our rind peeled back with pining.

Against Teleology

They made Eve an event, a teleology
we've teathed too many mouths upon, jawing
uneven through supposed apple skin. We've
seeded and ceded enough. Enough gnawing

on our bones by canonized men. Let fang
become fallout, reverse this ache, this *sorry*.
Let bees shimmer inside our eyes instead
of men's glory. Let's mouth a modern story,

revise every exodus, each line of dread
they put upon us in sackcloth or satin.
We took the garden with us, now the gavel

is our godhead. We'll not be suckled or bled
to ghosts again. We're the heart's rattle,
razored at our core. Full of sharp. Full of sheen.