

Russian Doll

By Jasmine Gray

when i blink, the gentle sway of letting in
and blocking out light, sun through a stained window

i feel stuck inside my grandmother's story
of how her mother had fallen
in winter ice or winter snow
and the ground had hit her hard

fallen women can't house what they can't remember –
the fragments haunt me -
i fear my grandmother's mother's man watches

i keep reading about women and god,
women and gods, women's gods, women gods,
god's women

i keep seeing his face reflected back,
a kiss on the imprint of an iris,
stain on glass

a master of no one, creator –
he was accused of sexual assault last year

i misremember
in an attempt to imagine myself as a church,
i play organ music so loud the water
of my ear canal curls to its own current

if this was not real life, i would seal each entrance shut

i sat beside a woman i love, i watch a brown leather world unfold
permanent autumn, no chance for rebirth

this cannot be real life
one memory: a distant organ playing,
a hooded figure, bells ringing

another: he thought of us as a slaughterhouse
a nice man

all these women – all these lonely children –
we all know the echoes of the dark

our world is divided by a split-screen
believers / non-believers
solace / slaughter

my grandmother and i take our seats and watch
together – the play of our joint inheritance