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Eugene Boudin's "The Gleaner"—1856

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EUGÈNE BOUDIN'S "THE GLEANOR"—1856

Downwind of summer, the season,
he said, didn't work out right.
I gather my hoard anyway—
certain starlit conversations,
a wistful parting. Mostly
that hint on the wind
that this is all it is,
moments I've attended,
telling a story of kernel
from chaff. Old sweater drawn
across my shoulders, buttoned
wrong in morning haste.
Stubble cutting my bare feet,
rake handle silent under my hand,
a wand to my yearning
for better yield, nineteenth
or twentieth century. My friend
in the background rakes hard,
mindful of need, her back shaped
to the task. Let the artist
from Ecole St. Simeon mistake
my stance for indolence.
Desire in the wheatfield
has no title—even
under a gothic sky.
My dark eyes move through the hours
ahead, willing a change in scene: sheaves
piled in the moonlight, rakes stacked
in the barn, long skirt hiked
to the waist, bruised feet
eased in the stream. Place me
there, Eugene Boudin, winnowed
to the languid bone.