Pictograph: The Red Deer Place

Melissa Kwasny
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Close to the river, which is rain-clear near its shore: seven doe, rose-orange. A mother with a fawn. One starburst. A hundred tally marks. A kind of feather. Clear water, red lacquer of the bare dogwood branches, the shale muted, mixed, spirit tempered with blood. Rock-blood, which is a flower shade, more silent, safer. Your mother is entering a timelessness on the edge of death. A light source so distant we feel auxiliary. Yet a loud thrumming of our ears against the gates. Why do whitetail deer have white tails when they could so easily betray them? In order, I think, to tie them like knots in a rope at night or in the confusion of flight from harm. The white is not so bright in the broken tines of hoarfrost, the penciled in trunks of aspen that fall in lines like faults or fences, yet these look like deer bodies, too. It is perhaps the heathering, the empty space between the colors. A fading language that might be bridge to our existence here.