

## POETRY CONTEST WINNER

Sarah Sousa

### Nets

*After Andrew Wyeth's Pentecost*

#### I

The nets are hung to dry from poles  
on Pentecost Island. They strain the ropes.  
They take the wind like sails but more  
diaphanous: wedding veils. Maine's dark  
coast blackens and rises into ledge  
like a beast's turned back. As far as the eye  
can see, crouched and daggered  
rock and relentless beating of waves.

#### II

A bride may marry and pose for photos  
at Pemaquid Point, her dress filling with wind  
as if she could take sail or flight. Whitewashed  
lighthouse rivals her whites: silk, lace, tulle  
and a handful of petals to toss. Her bouquet  
the wind takes easily from one hand  
and throws to the bright sea, to applause.

#### III

The girl washed out to sea further up the coast  
in an autumn storm. Couldn't be saved. It happens  
in a moment. She was watching the show  
of wave against rock; then she was of the wave,  
against the rocks. Her body, taken under,  
grew heavy with the weight of water  
and seaweed ropes she had run squealing  
from on a day at Popham  
Beach. Her mother would try not to think  
of that. Wyeth thought of nets:  
*In time the body floated by off Pemaquid Point.  
I was thinking about that girl's body  
floating there underwater, and the nets became her  
spirit.*

#### IV

Wind lifts the nets as the sea lifted,  
but did not deliver, the girl's body.  
Wind fills the manacled nets like bright curtains.  
She had to be fished-out with mended  
nets and practiced hands.  
She did not gasp when she hit the air.  
No divine wind filled her,  
not one human breath forced in.