Emma Hudson

Another world, another century,
from the fertile valley of the Mohawk, my great-grandmother
spills into time. I follow her life
in rumors—all I have—of a woman whose birth
made her persona non grata
to those later generations whose wish it was
to blot the ink of Indian blood
from the loose pages of our family tree.

Only I, expert builder of shells,
of carapaces, of cocoons to cushion
lack of acceptance and bastard names
with my own fabulous blasphemy of immaculate conception,
only I want to remember. One photograph is all,
forgotten, shoved to the bottom of an old cardboard box.
It shows her stiff, severe, standing at her husband’s elbow
while he sits, cradling my grandfather.

In the mirror, I see her face,
long nose, straight hair drawn at the nape
into old-fashioned bun. Her dark eyes mock my blue.
What randomness of time or nature made me
beneficiary to her inheritance? Here beside Lake Michigan
I am thankful for this sudden treasure,
this revelation, this river of blood, flowing
from her to me, blood river slipping between cliffs
of German, through crevices of Irish, Scot,
French, DNA from New York across Canada
to this present lake land delta.

Mother of those who journeyed so far
to bring me here, the dream of your blood
is my refuge now. The wind whispers your name
in my ear, gratifies my wings into unfurling.