

Helena Augusta

by Cecilia Durbin

Doesn't it make you sweat?
The small gods' horses
and strawy parched steeds,
the lonely ones mostly. You
kick off the mud
from Scythian swamps
stomped all the way here,
and in the swath and wheat trails,
can you see him too? With a
sickle or silver bracelet near his fist,
you have one yourself, good
stable-girl. One day, he will
leave you before you raze
the Temple of Venus
for a place to weep
in Eleona's lap—

both of you
on your knees.
One day,
the others will crown you
Imperatrix oedipal,
and the next, they will forget
like the coins stamped with your likeness,
a thousand reliefs in Black Sea sediment,
whose ancient eyes peer upward to the dark,
watching for celestial chariots
that have already burned out.