

Todd Fuller

Of All Things Winter

On a January morning, you can't see the snow barely falling, or a
wind pushing it
to a cabin's door. It's enough to catch the sound of a woman's voice
from inside,
where she twists on a bed built in Tulsa, Oklahoma; where she pushes
against the body
that's trying to fight out of her.

She glistens like a January moon as her hands press cosmologies into
crisp bed sheets.
It's January 28, 1898. And the body trying to merge into its own
breath, its own voice,
will soon feel snowflakes melting on its live tongue. But first there'll
be moments of screaming.
There will be flights of imagination and prayers spoken in Pawnee.

There will be flashbacks to 1875, to moments when a young girl
walked from Nebraska
to Indian Territory. And the images will go something like: the bones
of children's fingers,
the bodies of cholera-filled Pawnee, and shallow graves undone by the
shoveling feet
of scavenging birds.

And there will be other women standing around the bed. They'll wipe
the woman's birth sweat
from her mouth and tell stories about their own children. The room
will fill with aromas
and discussions of possible names. And their hands will be busy with
wet cloths,
and one of them will crowd her palms beneath the body that shapes

itself one inch at a time into its own shoulders, hips, and feet. Steam
will wind off the legs
and twirl off his tightly fisted hands, and his mother will say "Moses,"
and the other women
will say "YellowHorse," and laugh at the moment his father enters the
room with eyes as bright
as suns.

When it's over, there's always food on the other side of a ceremony,
always stories
about how the child'll grow, the possibilities, hopes that this one boy
might somehow dazzle
the future. And there's little silence as the cabin's door rattles.