Fox Watches, Refusing to Smile

for Jenni Zellner

Now the crows drop winter from their wings, invoke the harshest season with their cry.
— Angela Carter, “The Erl-King”

as she hears sky telling soft earth
to harden, shrink, stifle all pulsing
as he who has hidden in farthest dark
comes forth to command full praise.
The rusty fox, its muzzle sharpened
to a point, laid its head upon

his knee Fox reads, resisting, sensing
a little of the cold air that blows
over graveyards always goes with him

like the goblins she has had to conquer,
the gropers at dusk and dawn. Fox
has had to work hard to survive

so many tricksters, so many fools, knows
there are some eyes can eat you
and His are quite green, as if from

too much looking at the woods: her woods,
Fox asserts with a growl, where she’ll keep her own good company, thank you,
resting her muzzle on a strong warm thigh
and making babies the color of dirt
where roots and seeds wait, thriving.