

KATHARYN HOWD MACHAN

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.