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2009 Artist-in-Residence  
Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

## **Maternal Lineage**

She waits inside the optical illusion  
of the meetinghouse. Men assemble

on the right side, while the other gender  
sits with the children on the left.

She folds her hands in prayer.  
Like others in the town, this church's

design is simple, created in necessity,  
lamps, windows, doors, a coal stove.

But here, men and women divide  
the interior space by partition,

a wall which slides up and down  
with effort. It retains the voices

of each separate sex. Silence  
allows anyone, a minister, a man,

or woman to preach, to break  
the morning hours they hold.

The partition divides the meetinghouse  
and people into symmetrical copies.

She glances over the wooden barrier  
as if into a mirror to see her reflection

distorted by mustache. A man  
in black trousers and jacket sits.

He doesn't notice her stare, the shock  
echo in the lines around her eyes.

She sees the delusion of it,  
the division between them.

She opens her hands, inhales.  
She begins to speak.