Anne Brannen

**Pythia Invents Ekphrasis**

Eventually they’d find me
and drag me to that
damned tripod. I’d tell
them I hated it. No response.

No more sheep to shear
or olives to press:
the earth twisted, the
fumes rose, the murals

shone. No one else
saw it; I had to explain.
On the walls other lives
spun themselves out,

silent visions threading
across time. They wanted
details. I translated
what I saw. The art of failure.

Though they made much of it.
Apollo came by and got
a roof, columns, deep
tiers of seating, and stayed.

I was busy. Some years were better
than others, some lifetimes
more pleasant, and certainly some
deaths preferable. That time

I was buried alive, for instance—
nasty. But I was right every
time. You’ll lose the war.
Look out for dragons.

Get rid of the poll tax.
Leave the Persians alone.
I spoke for the earth, silent,
voiceless, not Apollo, who had
a score, a paint box, writing supplies, and needed no translation. He was chasing girls. I wove metal into mottoes, I predicted the renewal of spring, I gave history a bed, through me the old volcanic blood wrote time, and I, every time, said not it, not the blood, not the vision, but words, nothing but words.

Finally, I was fired. This was a relief. Shut down the temples, move on. Apollo hangs out in bars with the bands,

I sit in coffee shops reading tarot cards, the earth spins her blood into rock, and the translation is what you wanted, or did not want, to hear: know yourself.