

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.

