The Whipping Woman

The woman I hire to daughter my mother makes bi-weekly visits to the dementia ward
Lies down beside the near-still waters

Accepts the mouth kisses wet with drool
from where gravelly words
dribble down washed-out gullies

Like a whipping boy she bears the brunt
of each face-to-face flagellation
that my rawhide flesh refuses

And for twenty dollars an hour I purchase
like the contraposition of a professional mourner
substitution for services I can’t supply

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