

HER SILENCE IS

endless linen wound to cripple
her toes, binding ever closer

the voices of her feet. Her hair
bound in a snood of woven gold.

Is statement. Custom. Consequence.

Her hips' swash constricted
by panniers' brocade. Floating

rib removed, the more closely
to corset her waist. Breath.

Is handcuff. Straitjacket. Gag.

Her stiletto heel. Hobble-skirt. Chador
muting verb and adverb of her stride.

Both bandage and wound. Glitter
and mesh that nets her tongue.

Is calling. Witness. Refusal.

Is shame. Cinch: apron string, crib.
Is fear: of what she might say,

were she free to speak: breaking
forth from ankle, ear, hair, cheek,

rib hand hip lip lips—
breaking forth from tongue

tongue unbridled tongue

~Judith H. Montgomery

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