

M1

In the high tech observatory we gaze backward six thousand  
years to the Crab Nebula, tendrils unwinding the mystery

of linear space and time. We cast about for dark matter,  
suns, galaxies small and whorled as your thumbprint.

In 1054 peasants working their fields discovered the crab:  
remnant of a supernova, a day star that shone for two years

as Northmen plundered the English coast and pilgrims  
trundled the steps of Santiago de Compostela.

Now, it's heart collapsed, the crab appears a spectral body  
on a computer screen, veins blood red and blue pulsing

gamma rays through the fog of elements. We save the images  
in a folder and I step outside for some air. There above the trees

the moon is rising, full and unfiltered, dispatched  
from the vault of heaven to the pupil in the eye of a woman

standing in the grass. I raise my arms, and I want to hold  
onto the edge of the earth. And dear God, I want to let go.

CYNTHIA HUGHES