

My Life

Like Jonas by the fish was I received by it,
swung and swept in its dark waters,
driven to the deeps by it and beyond many rocks.
Without any touching of its teeth, I tumbled into it
with no more struggle than a mote of dust
entering the door of a cathedral, so muckle were its jaws.
How heel over head was I hurled down
the broad road of its throat, stopped inside
its chest wide as a hall, and like Jonas I stood up
asking where the beast was and finding it nowhere,
there in grease and sorrow I build my bower.

Kiss

In the cooking pot my aunt's long spoon pets the lamb's
Severed head, anoints with oil its one terrible eye
Until it weeps at the flowers on her dress.
Where there was body once, now there is iron and fire.
I am here to help. I am here to put my hand under
The lamb's chin and tip it back as though for a kiss.
I am here to help the lamb with the axe
That halves the skull as I have heard my aunt halve
Her husband's name at night. *I/saac*.
The body cannot die. In the hard push of meadow
Behind the empty house I have seen the lamb's body
Ride a spit of peeled plum under my uncle's hand.
I have seen the lamb lie down in the fire and rise
To its cleft hooves. Through the dark archway
Of the cut neck I have watched the heart leak
Fire and flower a dry foam of ash.
The body cannot die. I can see this.
When the throat is tilted to let the smoke loose
The lamb's shadow crawls forward, licks, then swallows
The whole rough tongue of stones where I lie.
It is too quiet. I can feel the uneven knocking
Of my heart like someone tired hobbling across a yard.
Death is nothing.
It is fire looking for a place to start. It is a word
On the tip of the lamb's halved tongue, a kiss,
The smoke carrying the green wood into the firmament.

Grieving Was

not the summer of aspic
and cold veal. It was so hot

the car seat stung my thighs
and the rearview mirror swam

with mirage. In the back seat
the leather grip was noosed by twine.

We were not poor but we had
the troubles of the poor.

She who had been that soft snore
beside the Nytol, open-mouthed,

was gone, somewhere, somewhere
there was a bay, there was a boat,

there was a scold in mother's mouth.
What I remember best

is the way everything came and went
in the window of my brief attention.

At the wake I was beguiled
by the chromium yellow lemon pies.

The grandfather clock's pendant
of unaffordable gold told the quarter hour.

The hearse rolled forward over the Os
of its own surprise.