

1970

# Salami

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S A L A M I

Stomach of goat, crushed  
sheep balls, soft full  
pearls of pig eyes,  
snout gristle, fresh earth,  
worn iron of trotter, slate  
of Zaragoza, dried cat heart,  
cock claws. She grinds  
them with one hand and  
with the other fists  
mountain thyme, basil,  
paprika, and knobs of garlic.  
And if a tooth of stink thistle  
pulls blood from the round  
blue marbled hand  
all the better for  
this ruby of Pamplona,  
this bright jewel of Vich,  
this stained crown  
of Solsona, this  
salami.

The daughter  
of mismatched eyes,  
36 year old infant smelling  
of milk. Mama, she cries, mama,  
but mama is gone,  
and the old stone cutter  
must wipe the drool  
from her jumper. His puffed fingers  
unbutton and point her  
to toilet. Ten, twelve hours  
a day, as long as the winter sun  
holds up he rebuilds  
the unvisited church  
of San Martin. Cheep cheep  
of the hammer high above  
the town, sparrow cries  
lost in the wind or lost  
in the mind. At dusk he leans  
to the coal dull wooden Virgin  
and asks for blessings on

the slow one and peace  
on his grizzled head, asks  
finally and each night  
for the forbidden, for  
the knowledge of every  
mysterious stone, and  
the words go out on  
the overwhelming incense  
of salami.

A single crow  
passed high over the house,  
I wakened out of nightmare.  
The winds had changed,  
the Tramontana was tearing  
out of the Holy Mountains  
to meet the sea winds  
in my yard, burning and  
scaring the young pines.  
The single poplar wailed  
in terror. With salt,  
with guilt, with the need  
to die, the vestments  
of my life flared, I  
was on fire, a stranger  
staggering through my house  
butting walls and falling  
over furniture looking  
for a way out. In the last room  
where moonlight slanted  
through a broken shutter  
I found my smallest son  
asleep or dead, floating  
on a bed of colorless light.  
When I leaned closer  
I could smell the small breaths  
going and coming, and each  
bore its prayer for me,  
the true and earthy prayer  
of salami.