The Cause of All My Suffering

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Recommended Citation

Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4856
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THE CAUSE OF ALL MY SUFFERING

My neighbor keeps a box of baby pigs all winter in her kitchen. They are motherless, always sleeping, sleepy creatures of blood & fog, a vapor of them wraps my house in gauze, and the windows mist up with their warm breath, their moist snores. They watch her peel potatoes, boil water from the floor, wearing a steamy gown. She must be like Demeter to them, but, like this weather to me, this box of pigs is the cause of all my suffering. They smell of invalids, lotioned. Death is over there. When I look toward my neighbor's house, I see trouble looking back at me. Horrible life! Horrible town! I start to dream their dreams. I dream my muzzle's pressed desperately into the whiskered belly of my dead mother. No milk there. I dream
I slumber in a cardboard box
in a human kitchen, wishing, while

a woman I don't love
mushes corn for me in a dish. In
every kitchen in the Midwest
there are goddesses & pigs, the sacred
contagion of pity, of giving, of loss. You can't escape the soft

bellies of your neighbors' calm, the fuzzy lullabies that drift
in cloudy piglets across their lawns. I dream my neighbor cuts
one of them open, and stars fall out, and roll across the floor. It frightens me. I pray
to God to give me the ability to write

better poems than the poems of those whom I despise. But
before spring comes, my neighbor's pigs die in her kitchen
one by one, and I catch a glimpse of my own face
in the empty collection plate, looking up at me, hungrily, one

Sunday—pink, and smudged—and ask it
Isn't that enough?