

Spring 1975

Two Poems

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TESTIMONY

I witness this at seven:
Two shots shatter the skull,
capped bottles exploding in dump fires.
I am camouflaged, crud-faced,
peeking from behind the burnt can pile.

The policeman thumbs the hammer
twice, the collie flinches.
Her tail is the first to die.
She wriggles in the ash,
the limp tongue spilling with her blood.

I witness this at seven,
quivering behind the burnt can pile,
arms locked around Smokey's neck,
my eyes glowering wet
in the sun, two brass .38 hulls.

The policeman thumbs the hammer
twice, the collie flinches.
My dog licks her eyes shut,
and bluebottle flies buzz
like deaf women pray in church.

I witness this at seven,
in search of soapbox wheels.
I find instead this desire to kill,
and leave the bloated cop to rot
behind the burnt can pile.

THE PIG ROAST

*There is something cold about the stench
of slaughter even though the blood can
burn your hands.*

In Ronan, we buy the pig,
a weaner, scalded pink
skin, slick as the ball
end of a hambone. So gross
we take pictures, Quinton
kissing it like a baby,
and give it a name.
But when the coals are white
we slop his ass with sauce
and lower him into the pit.

And there, in the glower of heat,
I see that white horse again
running the road to Ronan,
a deep slit in his brisket
opens and closes
with each stride, like lips
spewing blood, a fiery gash
in the earth's chest
fumes a dark red voice.

(For Tom, Maggie & Q)