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new and selected poems

ellen 'windy' lytle

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under a pear tree

it's my first night alone
he had to leave
i had to have an empty closet
and clean walls
unclotted nights
and dangling dolls
i had to have a vacant ice-box
for bushels of bean sprouts

too bad he left
a pound of saltines
and breakstone's sour cream
half a bagel and a colt 45

i ate every cracker
dipping them
into his sour cream
and savagely kept reading
flannery o'connor

i spread the bagel with his butter
slopping down the colt 45
as if it was him i was eating
as if i could finish him off
to the bone
that could be buried
under a pear tree

under broken glass

it's all spring
when they rip each
other apart
like splitting a chicken
by its thighs—

he puts a silvery knife
against her vagina
and draws just enough blood
to paint her

long ago she was white
as the bathroom sink
and between her legs was slit
into a darkness he loved;

her pubescence like virgin snow
he could mold and twist
her agreeable nature
mount her like a full moon
ride her home
w/out ever leaving

the darkened room

shutting out traffic
and the blossoming
trees on parsons boulevard

from a seaside in st. thomas to a poem in nyc

**this poem is not only about fish
but about people who are hungry
and need to be satisfied now—
people, who passionately dive
into sex, into food
without scheme without rhyme**

**desiring to be filled
the poem tries to savor but devours them
and stands helplessly by
watching
as in the case of the great phosphorescent fish
watching
as this fish leaps from a burlap sack
and hooks onto a gutted flounder
swinging from a yellowed noose**

**attempting to report its own interpretation
within, of course, the boundaries of poetics
this poem is a horrible failure
because, even if its rhythms are perfect,
its breaths on time,
the fish is strangling
on the bones of its supper
(being the last of the day's catch to die)**

**while the poem worries on
about form**

desperate cheer

**this christmas there's a slow burn
of dreary upstate under my ribs,
a frigid frieze of old buildings
sinking into a previous snow**

**and off the thruway,
behind shacks where dogs live
chained, i watch their fancy
lights dancing in the dark**

**like my sister in binghamton
w/twelve tinsel trees
christmas is mostly
what these folks' got**

**one day a year to string up,
put up, eat up
and drink up,
sweet
w/desperate cheer**