

Deer Hanging From the Ceiling

My father inhales,
exhales the breath of another -

with lips parted thin
we pray over the power of life
and the power to snatch life away.

Practicing precision, he hands me
the warm heart of death
and I can feel the wind
bend around my face.

There is a time for being right
and a time for being strong -

My brother will not pray with us
over Christmas dinner,
I wish he knew our love runs
deeper than his belief.

In the garage
my father teaches me
to pull skin from flesh,
flesh from meat,
meat from bone;

Teaches me the importance
of being thankful,
never wasteful,
always patient.

Under the basement stairs
we find our adolescence waiting -

Written in gold,
washed in holy water
and spoken in praise -

We find the thin line
between this world and the next,
like something spoken
before we were born.

Suddenly I am young enough
to smell the blood,
barefoot on the garage floor.

Young enough to believe
in the power of taking life,
in the power of prayer over death;

Young enough to believe
in the significance of deer
hanging from the ceiling.