

Brent House

Red, on the Pain of Ridding

I remember the days,
those pains I stayed for my son,
days on ends, I thought
those days was going to kill me,
but I said I'd quit & I done
just what I said. I got to where
I couldn't eat or nothing,
for two weeks I couldn't be still,
yet I done just what I said.

I got to where I even
had to have a chew in the tub,
I'd soak & spit my ambeer
into the toilet. I got to where
I'd set a drink by my bed,
then wake for a couple of swallows
before I could go back to sleep.

I was just a boy when I started,
I thought that drink was awful,
but I got used to it, & I chewed
to spit on worms I hooked,
make them wiggle, & before long
I did it all the time.

I didn't not pray to stop,
but one day I prayed hard,
because I didn't want my boy
to follow in my path, to follow
my worst habits I ever
got into my life & I got sick
when I took my morning chew,
& I couldn't stomach a drink.

I trembled all over,
it had done got a hold of me,
but I stayed right with it,
on account of that boy,
I had to quit, even if it killed me.
& I done what I said, I stayed
right with it, then it finally left
& didn't bother me no more.

Red, on Three Means of Altering

1.

Flesh and br²d, I cut in hollows, after a cold snap,
stainless steel sharper than my father's whetted knives
& his father's, also,
until the steer, unmanned, bleeds from sack to heel,
bellows, stands on hoof, pastern, and cannon bone,
white mist of music
molts & lilt, as ocean's salty breath,
secretory, sinks through my skin
& whatever hurts when I come into a mute
coda of intimate shock.

2.

So much blood will not pass, & still, open
intima of vessels, life in a barren field, a slow thrung
cord, until I am sieged
by trauma of a bridled head, bound
until necrosy tears a river of flotsam & ambeer,
calcined & brown, as lanugo or vellus
caught in the blunt teeth
of my force, an inherited dysphoria
between humous field & tannin water,
between willow & pine.

3.

Around the neck of the scrotum,
the ring, with my body between his legs, his body
between mine, anaphoric cries, resonant
with God's majesty, shake corrals & forests
beyond the pastures,
& his nose, wet with turnkind breath, soon,
dewy softs of spring pastures, stubble of summer
drought, & the stick of fall molasses,
as he reaches his tongue to gather grains from black
flesh to rumination.