

Copyright©2019. Giordano Durante. This text may be archived and redistributed both in electronic form and in hard copy, provided that the author and journal are properly cited and no fee is charged.

KATIE

Miniature mother to the dismembered dozen,

Fickle, fleet urchin,

Immune to the odd bump

But fragile too,

Brought down for days by a cold

Or injured by a sharp word or look.

What early thoughts fill your mind

Of a world where everyone must sleep

At your behest?

Of forbidden foods

And the dog's renegade claim to titbits,

Of corners, cubbyholes

The enchanted spaces of the young?

Your linguistic experiments

Bring snatches of song

And echoes of verbal tics

Unknown even to us.

Disheveled daughter,

Can we predict your nature

From a complex genetic sum of parts?

How can your flourishing

Be bound up in you now when

The world and

A single day contain so much

Unearned triumph and decline?

Always behind you, I pick up

A doll; its purple hair

Plucked out by your small fingers.

ON THE METAPHYSICS OF DESIRE

Hairdryer hot

Our bags sit like dented vegetables

In the unfamiliar hotel

Backstreets empty

Fountain plops through

The wooden window

Wanting always beats getting

But what about beyond

This bundle of incompatible

Smothered wishes

These pining bodies

Forever yanked forward

We learned puzzles

Like the ruined past

Still gleaming away within

The mimicry and memory

Of desire

Is still desire.

ABUELA, COCINA

It could be best

Explored those

Mornings missing

School through

Feigned illness

I stayed at home

Witness to the

Rhythms of her tasks

Legumes somersaulting

In pans

The gently heating

Oil breeding bubbles

And that object of wonder

The dark silver

Meat grinder

Its swirled auger

Our fingers feared

I was forever climbing

Doorframes and

The back of the

Sofa a bridge

Through the kitchen  
Window over  
Which dangled like  
Spent balloons  
A huddle of sweaty  
Chorizos and morcillas  
Their deep animal  
Essence hemmed in and  
Spicy behind intestinal casings  
Studded with shining  
Grease blobs  
(Take a bite and  
Wait for the aftermath)  
My grandfather impassive  
During the deed  
Pressing with a fork  
A wobble of  
Tocino onto irregular bread  
His model-crafting hands  
Still steady back then  
  
But it's the spring onions  
Above all I treasure  
How they earned such sweetness  
When fried with eggs  
How they eased in part  
Those luring afternoon hours

How it all depended

On the flick of

My grandmother's wrist

ASPARAGUS

Truth be told, no other vegetable comes close;  
No other comes in the form of spears,  
Though they'd be useless in battle -  
Floppy green weapons for a troll army.

I think of the softness of your tips,  
Your tooth-satisfying crunchy stalks,  
How you suit eggs and garlic, tossed,  
And, most of all, of how you introduce a potent  
Floral ghost into my piss,  
The heady memory of the meadow  
Rising from the toilet bowl at dawn.

Bunched awkwardly in supermarkets,  
Seasonal, tinned, and your blanched cousins  
Those pale fat fingers in jars,  
A scientific experiment gone wrong,  
A freak-show attraction,  
Like those long gone irregular  
Foetuses in the old hospital.

But you're best when lying uncooked,  
Fresh-green on the chopping board,  
And I imagine they've felled a whole forest

Of gently swaying spears; can almost

See tree trunk rings, bark, buds.

So now, tiny trees, sing to me in

Plangent, horn-like tones

About the escape from

The rush of time and tense.