

Beware the Swallows

Vaguely grinning and huge
cannibals invaded the suburbs
when I was five.
They whispered outside my window
shuffling their feet.

A cannibal lives
even when curtains
are drawn
lives cruelly
rearranging itself
like an animal eating
parts of its feet
and hiding the stumps
in its mouth
for now.

This was their song.
Even the dead opal sky
snarls beware
horribly blue-lettered
like a savage Pict
creeping snow-covered
closer day by day
slowly drawing
blue tough arms
out of his caked hair.

They scribbled on the window.
They were singing through the screen.
Bedrooms should have many doors.
They should have doors
into safe lands.
The window is translucent as the moon
but nearer.
Cannibal faces walk on it
dirty as footprints.

You are an inhabitant
 of that old hungry land
 cannibal
 my swallower.
 You caper through curtains
 again and again
 flesh bird tasselling before me
 just twitching for a kiss.
 I am still only five
 and nervous in my bed.
 There are no doors into safe lands.
 When you drive to work in the morning
 fragments
 of atrocious breakfastings
 glint tulip red
 beneath your nails.

Janet Durno

Tinkers

have appeared
 on the grey outer limits,
 arrogant, planetary

flame and spirit
 that says without speech
 and takes nothing,

steps into thin air
 with coin of the realm
 bread and wine,

in the ashes
 our shape and our color,
 old, ingenuous laws.

James Cole