

SLUGS

Clogging the gutters
a bulbous fraternity of slugs
has gathered
to cross silvery trails
in dusk's half light.
With fat grey skirts
orange-hemmed
they roll up like tongues,
sticky at the root.

As children
we religiously ripped apart
the squalid conventions
fascinated by our victims' pain
we saw their gaping fluted wounds
as ugly breathing flowers,
squeezed obscene lips
from the pouting fleshy petals
kissing and sucking
at the empty air
between our fingers.
We were not ashamed.

Now i try to forget –
but they insidiously
drag towards me,
smearing through my mind
with the terrible tearing sound
of glutinous resisting flesh.
Passing beneath the gutter
i am repulsed, sickened,
but cannot stay away. . .

Winter is damp here,
my hidden family thrives.
At night, alone
i hear the rain.

gutters gurgle, overflow—
wash out forboding
with childhood dreams. . .

Nicky was always leader.
I wanted us to marry,
but he said No—he was going
to join the army.

One day
out slugging, needle-armed, alert
his bold boy's bravado set new rules—
With clean pink mouth opened wide
he bit his speared slug in two,
swallowed the large mouthful whole
then, laughing, passed the rest to me.

Severed, palpitating,
the clammy body
oozed thick yellowish fluids —
my stomach churned, weakened, scared.
Despite his taunts and jeers
i could not put
that foul bleeding thing
between my lips.

But i'm older now—
i have years of courage.
Nicky—you didn't become a soldier,
instead you're at Cambridge
reading ancient history.
And we're still not married.

Patiently i await spring.
My bridal brood
will be so succulent
after winter's ritualistic rains.

Meanwhile i sharpen
my teeth on bone,
stuff bottom drawers
full with rotting tongues.