

Meat · *Michael Van Walleghe*

It was early Saturday, dawn
the day for buying meat . . .

My father had this friend
way over in Hamtramck

who knew all about meat
and so we'd drive uxorious

drunk mornings after payday
halfway across Detroit

to meet this expert
at the slaughter house

where they sold everything:
brains, testicles, tripe

all that precious offal
grocery stores disdained—

whole hog heads for headcheese
fresh duck blood, fresh feet

kidneys, giblets, pancreas . . .
The freshest meat in the world

my father's friend would shout
above the squealing, bleating

foaming panic of the animals
and my father would repeat it

all day long. *The freshest
goddamn meat in the world*

he'd croon to the barmaids
along our long route home

forgetting, even as he said it
that all that lovely meat

was spoiling in the car.
But I remembered. I knew

the trouble we were in.
I could already see us

opening the bloody packages—
our poor brains, our testicles

smelling up the whole kitchen
again, and in the sorry face

of all my father's promises
to come home early, sober

a fine example for his son
a good husband for a change

one of those smart guys
who knew all about meat.

The Age of Reason

Once, my father got invited
by an almost perfect stranger

a four hundred pound alcoholic
who bought the drinks all day