

## AVE MARIA

Ave, Ave, the trick  
is to stay crisp in this milk,  
to float through this winter  
steady as the rain we've seen,  
to wait for the days to lengthen  
so we may see our first bat,  
because we have no caves  
in which to hide our furred bodies  
when the wind slaps cold  
like a new-skin whip,  
Ave, Ave, we were boys once,  
we thrived on a game  
where we would die and lie still,  
hold the breath in our lungs and rise  
up in minutes to take someone new,  
it was no miracle when we rose,  
rose from the leaf piles—  
true soldier, the canteen is a thought  
that never lies still, booted or bootless  
in the mud and milky ice, Ave  
we were girls once,  
we put versions of ourselves  
in rooms we modeled ourselves,  
although the floors were fake  
and the walls lacked good paper,  
although the southern exposure  
was only a bulb of low wattage,  
and when the necks of our doll-selves  
did not turn  
we would twist until they would.

Ave—drink your juice,  
mend the cuff, love  
the way your hands on your kickback hips  
are meant as imperative joists,  
how you liken your fears  
to small paper boats on a sound—  
small boats on a sound,  
harken the herald, he's in your face:  
Ave, rise and shine Ave,  
enough of your narcoleptic fettering,  
all around us lie the addendum of agendas,  
it is truly an age of consent  
(might we hustle and invest ourselves?)  
we've already signed for the package;  
you are outstanding in your involuted ways.  
Soldier, doll, look at how the dalmatians on every block  
cower and hunch forth in a rabid wag-dance,  
Ave, Ave, you can sing the songs we used to hum,  
get up.