



## Cow Song

By Elena Karina Byrne

I heard them, far-off, deep calling  
 from behind death's invisible floor door. Their wallow  
 metronome from the after-rain mud was one giant body.  
 Arizona's yellow arm's length of light all the way  
 to my own body standing at the edge of their field held  
 me. I moved toward them and they toward me, as if to ask  
 for something from nothing, as memory does, each face

dumbfounded ... dumb and found by  
 the timeframe of my own fear, surrounded at dusk.  
 There was a plastic grocery bag, its ghost body cornered  
 small against a tree, and there was a heavy smell.  
 Desolation is equal to contained energy now.  
 Their heavy bodies slow toward me, my own  
 slow inside their circle without kulning.

Kulning is a Swedish song for cows, not  
 a pillowcase pulled over the head. Here, the mountains could be seen  
 from far away. There's an abandoned physics, a floor door,  
 my own head-call herding me, in-hearing nothing but them.  
 Bone for bone's female indicates the inside  
 of the mouth when singing is grief alone and is curved.

You can't stop shifting no matter how  
 slow. It sounds like confusion in one direction.  
 I wanted to tell you this in your absence. It sounds like the oak,  
 it sounds like the oak of floorboards in God's head.

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Poet, editor, and multi-media artist Elena Karina Byrne is poetry consultant and moderator for *The Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books, literary programs director for the Ruskin Art Club, and a judge for the Kate/Kingsley Tufts Prizes in poetry. She served as regional director of the Poetry Society of America for 12 years and has also served as executive director of AVK Arts.

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how they make it all look easy,...

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It was like climbing a mountain to those of us who'd climbed one. To the others, it was like, I suppose, something else. In other words, we let everybody find her own figure of speech....

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