

*Under no circumstances  
does the lord request a chicken:*

We are eight children in a christian academy  
who peered through shell  
under flashlight in bathroomed darkness  
& we whispered *gallus gallus*:  
    Holy ovoid  
    membrane illumination  
    tree brain  
    husk of my hand  
    Baby.

One day,  
you will chip away  
at your own house,  
& find there wasn't a better place to be  
than before the beginning.  
So, we read with you in warm red glow.  
(I had no idea then  
all my eggs would be this kind of light.  
That many things grow in warm and in red  
& many things die that way too.)  
Only one of you mercied your way out to us  
a toothpick boned black slimed squiggle.  
*Now our lesson, children, will be about death, and no longer about care.*

If a chicken could instruct a classroom  
we would know how to search  
for insects, seeds, and fruit.  
We would know how to fly just enough to make it home.  
We would be taught that unfortunate lesson about familiarity and contempt.  
Invite loss, deny christ, and know the oldest sport has no victors.

We could learn to announce our tissue with the sun—  
tell time again. Anticipate dawn before it rose.

Imagine singing every morning.  
Imagine acknowledging the audience of stars.  
What it would be to have names  
not riddled with our modes of production  
layers, writers, businessmen, broilers.

I stopped with my family somewhere deep in Pennsylvania  
at an ancient burger selling shed  
sandwiched between two incomprehensible cubes

pimpled with cameras and haloed with barbed wire.  
I asked myself that question of consideration  
the lives in those buildings—  
The poultry factory across the street from the egg factory.