

Life Cycle

He brings her in from the field
indigo sky striped with lemon
her fleece heavy with rain
pulls her from the truck
drags her into the barn

Magpies wait chattering on the roof
Beneath her tail her womb bulges
a maroon mass
which has pushed out new life
but still pushes

Her lamb beside her cries for food.
She turns her head
Gives a gentle murmuring bleat
He puts the lamb to another ewe
holds its mouth to the udder

He pushes the mass inside her
secures the skin with safety pins
Her neck stretches up
her head arched back
a soft groan on every outbreath

He walks to the farmhouse
boots squelching across the yard
the day's work done
turns on the television
pours himself a pint of beer

Owls call in distant woodland
a moonbeam lights the barn
I kneel beside her
gently stroke her face
whisper useless words of love

The cockerel crows
blue sky, the moon a fading crescent
Her eyes are open
her body cold and still
the pinned flesh torn and fringed

Her lamb suckles from surrogate teats
Will be plump by summer's end.