

Daddy Was a Baptist Barfly

my very first Mississippi myth I reminisce
until night is at its thickest sleep until he surfaces
my mayfly enshrined in molasses before he forgot me
he asked me to be his flower girl
played piano all night before the wedding and sang
the Tennessee river to sleep with that violent voice
of velvet I've never known I went walking the morning of
on a wink of dreams past the half-frozen lake
in my toddler stains and finery to find his antlers peeking
out of the shallows his soul so heavy no current or
church could lift him my father was a prairie you had
to scorch or suffer to know his house built on a blueness
that spared no one I was his little storm for a while
worshipping his mobile of pink Capiz shells now I nurse
the ache in my side where the magnolias think they know me
mother forgive me for the hordes of insects I raised
when I couldn't catch my breath in the blue mountains
forgive me for believing in the narrative he built if home was
not the truer story I wouldn't be reaching I have landscapes
to restore and sins I can't confess before vanishing
in another country our bodies are kinned by prayer
and crepe myrtle when I reenter the ruined fields
I can't look without wincing like a frog dazed
by the beam before green was tender
it was promise I can't conjure
a crueler word