

# KELLI BAER

## *A Rosary*

*for Terry Baer*

i

the lake swallowed him  
in grasping  
hungry sludgewater.  
it hadn't had a bodymeal  
for quite  
some time.

he thrashed she struggled  
both for and against him  
until it was clear she couldn't go on.

She let go.

and quite soon after

he let go, too.

ii

D.O.A. Grady Memorial  
delivered in soaking denims  
and with a contact lens lodged under one lid.

She cradled his head in her lap  
as if a mother's kiss  
could revive what was lost.

iii

I didn't know it was a rosary for the dead.  
(Who's dead? My father held life in the tube of his hand.)  
Counting heads, my mother knew before me.

detachment and somebody's nembutal  
brought the night down  
with something fuzzier than what we knew we felt.

iv

my own embryonic cries still choke me in the night  
and his younger brother paces midnight floors in trance:  
testimony to the way  
the dead go on living  
in the living  
who go on dying