

Learning by Heart-1992

Mary Crow

“Boredom is the dream bird which
hatches the egg of experience.”

-Walter Benjamin, The Art of Storytelling

Bowed over the ironing board,
Mother seemed to doze
and we tiptoes past the kitchen
afraid to break the spell.
We thought that if we ran away
she would have to break out
of her dream to find us.

But what we imagined
is not what happened.
We squatted behind the bushes,
waiting, blowing on our fingers,
tired of oranges and bread,
but still she didn't come.

Dusk recreated the landscape,
a lamb cried out for its mother,
but we heard no familiar call.
At last, cold and shy, we crept
home to the warm kitchen light.

Mother was fixing supper
as if she'd never missed us.

Gold coins of carrots
multiplied on the cutting board,
and the knife blade flashed
as it fell, and fell again.
Her head bowed, Mother
stood still in her trance.

We came into that light, hushed.