

That Night

That night we all got drunk
from too much sea & leisure
we'd cooked Maine lobsters,
shoving our scruples beneath our belts,
eyeing with lust
the great orange beasts
arched high on our platters
laughing gustily
at some old recollection
oblivious for a moment
to the deeds that occupied
our working lives:
the slaughter of innocents,
racism, & the threat of nuclear war—
honored only by our wine-drenched
conviviality.

For a moment, we forgot
you were absent; last child
born at the end of the 60s,
when Selma & Mylai were only names
on the map of your parents' memory.
Your landmarks: Three Mile Island,
rising cancer rates,
and a distant country called El Salvador,
where men went about for no good reason
slaughtering children.

Until you appeared at the door:
tears streaking a face of thirteen years
and the stiletto rage of a Jeremiah:
"Butchers! Murderers!
Even lobsters have lives to live."

Stunned in our slovenly tracks,
even gluttony could not save us

from the lessons we'd taught
too well.

~Sheila Collins