

To A Poet Accused Of Obscurity

for Benjamin Saltman

if we were to sit and talk at length i might say
you write too much of other writers here the conceit is too
clever
there you are too personal where's the internal logic explain
this to me it's inaccessible but setting all that aside
i'd say

i've seen you reveal the surprise in darkness, snarl
feet in tree roots, surf
Santa Ana winds, reveal landslides in a pebble
shifting, bones in the shadow on a window shade

i'd say you've made me genuflect before flowers
too dark to name, filled my spine with snow,
left a frozen glove burning on my palm

and i'd wonder how safe it is
to understand these poems too well.



Her Name Is

seven sons and a daughter four more born dead
one dress for church
one pair of pants to scrub trailer floors
and clothes in boiled well water
flash cards to drill her children in reading and math

aged and retarded cradled as her own
brightest student in her high school and college
hours daily before a stove kneading
and forming leftovers
the child who spoke only her name
clinging for hours to become the family's best mind
her potter's wheel shaping clay like so many lives
alone in a trailer with kids her husband
at sea for years mumps measles mono chicken pox
poison ivy hives
survived Mark Twain read aloud
seven kinds of homemade bread and religion
thrived best in private no one told her
how much they cared
suicide prevented by children afraid to lose life itself
don't know her never did but this
is a thank you note a son's naming

