

© 2009

Joe David Bellamy

“For Three Holsteins, Electrocuted in their Stanchions”

Cattle, though large compared to humans, are ten times more sensitive to electricity..... – newspaper article

At first in deep grass in the whispering-weathered spring
when swallows rose in choruses from the golden barn and
the meadow’s thatchwork of daisies and alfalfa rolled
beyond the distant hill, our hearts were in it.

But what could we know of the man with latex gloves
who skewered us with a brash pedigree of sperm?
For weeks, we dreamt of strange, tormented bulls whose
organs burned in some white-washed breeding parlor.

Birth was a form of grief followed by a constant yearning.
Stunned, we stood beside the fence and watering trough,
or in the field and chewed the purple flowers, our
huge tumescent udders scandalous beneath our bellies,

engorged with the heavy fluid of mother-love that
grew and grew though no calf ever suckled us—nor
walked beside us in our long procession homeward—only
the hungry, rubber mouths of the farmer’s machinery.

Then, one day, as corn silk thickened in the humid air
where once his blade cleaved the loam, a sparking
in the circuitry, nothing more, but sharp and lethal
as the hammer blow—the pain released us like a goring.