

Death in Arkansas

Eliza Gilkyson

I remember how the wood would smell
Just as the last great tree was felled
 Like many that came before
It was used for table and a door
 A palette and a long hall rack
 Hung my great grandfather's hat
 A stable and a barn, a bed and a seat
A roof and fence and a floor that creaked
And a coffin leanin against the wall
When there was a death in Arkansas
I liked the wagons and the wheels
 The wind that knocked us down in the fields
 And the girls with the southern drawl
 And those that came before were the pictures on the wall
 And the lone dogs howled and the crows would caw
When there was a death in Arkansas
We were laid to rest out under the sun
 And we breathed our last
 And it was done
 And the air redeemed us and we would learn
That a life was hallowed and we wouldn't burn
Hands folded gently to say goodbye
 It was just this place underneath the sky
 Do you see our bones hidin like a toad
 In the old red dirt that is now a road
 Beneath the sign that blinks off on
 And a shopping mall where the house is gone
 Forgetting that a soul may call
When there is a death in Arkansas
And a quilten patch of new concrete
 Helps the trucks roll down the street
 There's a Dollar Store by the setting sun
And a sign on the church says His Will is Done
 I can't see the birds or find the fields
 That hold my bones beneath the wheels
And a mother worries that her son won't call
 And a tv stares at a blinking wall
But the lone dogs howl and the crows still call
 When there is a death in Arkansas