

## SURVIVAL

*Leona Gom*

There was never gentleness.  
All this romantic bullshit  
about growing up on farms.  
All I remember  
are the pain and death.  
When pigs were castrated,  
their screams all afternoon  
and my father coming in,  
the guilty blood all over him.  
When calves were dehorned,  
their desperate bawling  
and my mother saying,  
"it doesn't really hurt them".  
When I saw kittens smashed  
against the barn walls,  
and dogs shot  
when they were too old  
to herd the cattle,  
and chickens  
with their severed heads  
throbbing on the bleeding ground,  
and horses shipped  
when my father bought a tractor,  
and I could bus to school.  
I learned a lot about necessity,  
that things are functional, or die;  
and I was not as ill-equipped  
as first I thought  
to live in cities.