

ERIC MILLER

Sleep Sink

As though waking were air and sleep water
 The girl passes from one to the other in the arms of her mother.
 As her mother lowers her into the crib and, she sinking,
 The girl gleams and shines as through nightfall air, nightfall water,
 I bend my knees and kneel to lapse with her
 Crouching now at the level where mattress whitens
 Against crib's darkly gleaming bars. She extends a hand
 Between the bars, moistened from her mouth two fingers,
 And she slaps me lightly for a confirmation, she smiles, she retracts,
 She curls up and she smiles with lips curled around two fingers,
 Index, middle, she has sucked herself into herself
 Like a moon plunged to the bottom of a lake.

My daughter has sunk like an anchor. I dive after,
 She's the anchor I lost with my father when, sky darkening,
 We sailed lost on a lake ringed by stone, night ascending
 Like a swimmer dripping oblivion from his shoulders
 And coolness rose, and fear, and awareness of how
 All rock is really hard potential of pain. We peered down,
 We saw the anchor descending slowly, as calmly
 As a broad, notched leaf or a hand
 That plays at mimicking fall of a leaf—
 Into the dark and darker tilting, uniting
 With dissolution of depth. We dove after it, colder,
 The light going brown in the water, the water denser,
 A shudder developing from within us
 As we dissolved in dissipating heat, dissipating hope.

It was lost. It anchored itself in the bed, the bedrock of night
And look, father dead, I found it here, gripping, anchored,
Keeping all the dreams down that she will forget, my daughter.