Past life regressions

it is a cave

narrowing as it goes deeper into the mountain,

high enough and wide enough to hold a small temple.

Smoky fires burn at the entrance, wafting

a smell of burning flesh, entrancing and demanding.

Bears once lived here, but have given up

trying to reclaim their territory; they don’t need

space for so many. Sounds of love

emerge from the darkened throat of the passage;

young men and women have gone back there to please

the elders who have lost their mates. Later,

they will return to their own mates or lovers,

the children now asleep,

and pair off around the fire, spreading their

leather sheets over the bundled grass,

and more of the music of fucking

will grace the air. It is like a contagion:

love spreads from couple to couple, the sounds

of the others urging them onward. Techniques

will be compared, ideas will be exchanged

and partners will occasionally be shared.

The boys, urged on by smell, sight and hearing

will masturbate together in the darkness,

touching each other nervously, each anticipating the day

when a girl will allow him his desire.

One man, especially repulsive, scarred

in a tribal war, will be left

alone by the fire, hoping for a mercy

from one of the already-sated, he doesn’t care which.

The eldest women emerge to gather

around their own fire, chatting and planning —

even the chief, hidden in the dark with his

sinuous child-woman, will bow to the wisdom

they have cooked up together.

They have had their fill of sex for now,

their men already snoring gracelessly,

while the full moon soars silver

over the untraveled horizon.

it is a hut

circular with a cone-shaped roof.

A woman and a man live there with a child,

a boy of few years, and a teenage girl

ripening in the heat of late summer.

Tonight she will leave her parents to go

to the hut of a boy of similar age

who has brought her a gift, a token

of his longing, and they will sit together

under the watchful eye of his grandmother

and whisper furtively of their desire.

Even as the evening is gradually filled

with the ghosts of culture and sex,

they will feel the blood rushing hot

to their hidden places, and know that

later that night they will have to take care,

each alone and filled with visions,

of the needs they cannot quite speak,

but whose forms have been learned

in the shape of those random lessons in love

provided by a settlement without doors.

When she returns to her hut

she will hear her probable father

labouring massively over the body

of her mother, and she will do her best

not to disturb them as she finds her

palette in the dark. She will lay there

in the black, listening and wishing

she did not have to listen.

When they are finished, and their breathing

has subsided into the gentle breeze

of a tropical night, she will reach down

her skirt and finger herself gently,

until sleep takes her, and she finds

one form of relief after another. She does

not know that her young brother remains awake,

already familiar with such sounds and motions,

and full of contempt for them. Once he laughed aloud,

and his probable father cuffed him into silence.

Soon it will be harvest time, and there will be

many initiates, and three seasons after, much

gurgling of babies, and perhaps a few deaths.

it is a house

in a town with high walls:

not an impressive house, not a manor

or the home of a big man,

but full of wives and children.

The man has his own room, the doorway

covered with a curtain of rude linen.

The wives have another room, where the youngest

of the children sleep with them,

while the older ones sleep on common beds,

divided by sex, in the main room.

The husband practices safe sex;

that is, he doesn’t have sex with

the wife or daughter of any man

who could beat him in a fight.

Each night, if he has the energy,

he takes one of his wives to bed with him,

while the other two sleep in the next room.

He vaguely understands that they make love

to each other when they are not privileged

to sleep with him, but what he doesn’t know

is that they prefer it. The children feel

surrounded, oppressed by sex, especially

the eldest son, who is embarrassed by his

masturbation, feeling it a sign of weakness

and unmanliness. He does his work alone,

while tending the sheep, far from the prying

eyes of his three sisters, but is unaware

that they know exactly what he has been doing,

and that he gets mighty erections

many times each night, tenting the fabric

of his blanket most humorously. One night, drunk

on the rough beer of the priests, he tried

to crawl into bed with them, and they scratched

him viciously. He awoke bloody, unable

to remember where he got the welts. He

has heard rumours that his best friend’s

mother will fuck any man who can

evade her husband’s stern gaze, but as yet,

he has not spoken with any honest man who can claim

to have done so, and he therefore keeps his distance.

On occasion, he has sex with his friend,

an ill-kept secret in a tightly knit community,

not realizing the contempt the women

hold him in as a result, and how it hurts his chances

of his father finding him a wife. When the rains

come, the sheep will be penned, and his

desperation will beat down on him like

droplets of icy revenge.

It is a palace

surrounded by slum, and she is a slave.

The tiny sum she receives each month

does not change her status: she is at their

beck and call twenty-four hours a day.

The master of the house uses her occasionally,

for his own pleasure or that of his guests, and

consequently she is hated by her mistress,

who has no say in the matter. She has

learned to hate fucking, and learned to hate men,

seeing them all as measures of depravity,

their status being in direct relation

to the strangeness of the demands that they

make of her. There is no part of her body

that has not been abused, but she is too

strong to internalize her hatred, and too

smart to externalize it. Instead, it rides

her like a second skin. Many of the

palace women, and some of the younger men,

feel the same, for youth is a commodity here.

She does not know, however, that she is

loved from afar, by the master of horse,

a decent and strong man, too ugly

to be taken into the private chambers

of either nobleman or noblewoman,

and that if she would have him, her lot

would improve immeasurably. He sees

images of her when he is lying awake

on his straw bed, and must seek a

weak satisfaction at his own hands.

What is unusual is that he does not

see her naked, but robed like a rich lady,

almost virginal in her vestments. To

him, the sexuality of the palace is a river

that flows around him, an island

of humanity in a stream of degeneracy,

and he is right. The priests, tonight

and again tomorrow, will sacrifice

a bull and many chickens and sheep,

to satiate a god who rapes as he pleases.