

i came home
Winner of the Purple Prize
Grace Manning

to find it tethered to the jagged edge
of a broken pipe

it dragged a little
bleated more softly than it would

in the grey heat haze hours of morning
when the papaya tree filled

with tiny green birds their nests
swollen woven tumors hanging

from weakening branches their sound
the rolling of thousands of stones

would be only a part
of the reawakening

it lived there
for three weeks

swatting flies hovering around its patchy hair
scaring little girls who ran around corners

eating leftover *batons de manioc* and
eru and *fufu* and whining

before the morning could erupt
stirring dust

into eye sockets and settle
tacky hot over the city

it was a gift
from a man who couldn't pay his doctor in francs

and so paid in this goat
and three bags of sugarcane

which we chewed up sucked out
swallowed and spat

wads of woody pulp
into the gutter across the street

already choked with debris from the last rain
and then we ate it

on a sunday i remember it
they had cut the lights

and we ate in the dark
the table still smelled like blood

and animal and the heat
that won't let anything

go.