

# Snoot

by Lindsay B-e

Professor, it's been thirteen years since you told me  
not to make art projects about my pets,  
beasts that aren't lofty enough,  
tufts of fur rolling like tumbleweeds.  
I've tried to be tame, a cold metallic  
distance between what I make and who I see,  
out of the corner of my eye, napping in a sunbeam.

My childhood had a pile of animal carcasses,  
you see, borne of a fur trapper, skinless  
beavers with yellow teeth as long as the sunbeams,  
as long as the land, clouded eyeballs,  
marbled red and white flesh, slick.

Our dogs played in the backyard,  
amongst limbs and hooves and halved  
hip bones from the consumable ones,  
playing, for some reason, for if they were wild,  
it would be them, theirs.

There are things to be said, Professor,  
about my relationship to the ones I love  
and the ones I eat, but you told me not to consider  
these creatures, uninteresting drivel.  
On bad days, I look outside to appease you, false  
fronts and glamour shots, but on the good days,  
I catalyze your flawed criticism,  
being feral and sincere, fur and skin.

My oldest pet is fourteen, a lumbering  
greying dog who can't hear and whose  
clouded eyes remind me of the dead beavers.  
I've dealt with death before, regularly,  
cutting board - 350 degrees - meat thermometre,  
but this upcoming death will be  
the first animal carcass that I loved.

As children, we used the bodies of critter strangers  
as playthings and gruesome garden découpage,  
but the demise of the beloveds, backyard dogs,  
happened offscreen, with my dad, a long drive,  
and a gun, their bodies never to return, maggot meat.

I've never made that final killing decision when it mattered,  
to me, and I'm ashamed I don't know how.  
This long road to death, as long as the sunbeams,  
as long as the land, frightens me, cold shadow.  
The old dog sleeps, mostly, and I run  
my foot down their side as I pass by, to check.  
I bathe my breath as I feel for  
warmth - life - meat thermometre.

So much of who I am is defined by  
these fur-covered bodies,  
some loved and some skinned,  
marbled red and white flesh underneath,  
and trying to shift around  
what isn't captivating,  
what isn't art.

Professor, have you ever seen a dog snoot?  
Have you ever seen a dog snoot without skin?