

# *Interruption*

KEITH ALEXANDER

A cow in the meat yard opened its mouth  
and out poured the voice of Bessie Smith.  
The tune—not that it matters—  
was Stormy Weather,  
the tone of the voice a shouting blues,  
which squeezed through the pores of its hide.  
We heard the bending melody  
and raced from the slaughterhouse,  
knives in hands, aprons sopping,  
to watch for ourselves.  
“Don’t know why there ain’t no sun up in the sky  
stormy weather . . .”  
And we stood beating time in the dirt with our slickers,  
humming and swaying,  
stirred by damp lyrics on a dry day.  
When she opened her eyes, silent  
and chewing, we saw hundreds of cattle,  
witness to the soulful offering, and knew  
we had to kill her then,  
before she sang again, before we fell  
in love with her voice forever.