

# Inservice

Natalie Homer

The bubblegum in my stomach gathers into a slick ball of pink and blue.  
We worry about you, she said, during a birthday party.  
A watermelon vines in my intestines.  
When my stepmother told me not to come home without calling first,  
I knew            I'd never be back.

We all have a few leftover keys  
to places we can't go back to.  
Mushrooms cluster in the throat, bloom out the mouth and eye sockets.  
So many years ago, the rabbit my brother caught under a laundry basket  
was bleeding behind the ears, and we let it go immediately,  
as if that meant our hands were clean.

The radio reassures: This is your night.  
In the tender lung, a pea seed splits, sprouts.  
Thank-you notes are for strangers,  
so I lick the envelope and write my parents' address.  
As kids we scooped tiny frogs into paper cups, brought them back to the  
barbecue.  
Deformed, we said. Look. No, they explained, just in transition.