Mrs. Ramsay's Knee

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Published by Utah State University Press

Anderson, Idris.
Mrs. Ramsay's Knee.
Utah State University Press, 2008.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/9854.

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8. THE TURTLE

How much of your life can you live entirely under public surfaces, not breathing mammal air, the dry-as-dust smell of it, sterile as stone?
Beautiful swimmer, when you move there swift as a current, your body’s not heavy, that delicate wise head stretches out.
Dark, deep in the soft pond bottom, how well do you bear the hard leisure of thought, the slow wait for the song of a bird, the old public dangers?
Weak eyes blink slowly. Is light hostile or good?
You smell as I smell the dank sweet rot of wood.
The raw end of a log where you’ve climbed puts out new green leaves in odd abundance. Colored and carved and polished like treasure, you sun until you see me, the yellow flash of that last left foot pushing.

9. CARAVAGGIO

for my godson, Cameron

Square in the middle of the painting of the Holy Family the back of the angel with grey wings is feathered like a dove’s and softly folded. She’s perfectly at home and will stay a while. She’s looking at Joseph who’s holding the score of her music which can be read over her shoulder. Even I can read it and begin to hear beautiful music.
Joseph is content to be helpful, his goodness through and through. And the donkey’s wet eye is moving, looking at me.
Meanwhile to the right of the angel are Mary and her baby, a real one who looks like my godson in Chicago.
He’s moving like a baby, squirming, his fists fighting the air, feet fleshy with fat. Mary is dealing.
I like them all enormously, like unmet friends.
They seem to admit strangers. I want to move in.