

DAILY BREAD

LINWOOD RUMNEY

No music allowed in the bakery
where I work—the baker's zealous speech
carries the morning cadence.
I, alone with him where
no natural light can enter, heft and deliver
bulk bags of flour, yeast, salt.

Over the hymn of industrial mixers that flash
like chain mail, he proclaims,
Of all things men make, bread is closest to God.

I shuffle between proofing stations
to oil and stack racks of bread pans,
building transient temples gleaming
a head taller than me—ready to receive
the daily dose of faith.

Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
he intones as the dough congeals,
folded and braided into itself
by the rhythm of the mixing blade—
*Who eat up my people as they eat bread
and call not upon the Lord?*

We slap dawn's first dough
onto the cutting table as he repeats
that I am unfit to bake with him:
It takes belief first, then skill.
Lacking both, I grip the slicer,
crude in its perfectly rectangular shape,
and plunge it into the dull mass
before me, granting form to his faith.