

GOAT LIFE

I stood at Knossos thinking of the goat
tethered to the olive tree halfway
up the mountain above our village.
It spends its days following the shadow
of the tree around its trunk, seeking shade
and knowing just what to do about it.

I move in circles such as this, and it
gets harder now that the mangey old goat
is stiffer and the tree won't give the shade
it used to, because it's more than halfway
gone, grown sparse and barren. It's a shadow
of its younger self. There's talk in the village

of cutting it down. This is my village
too, but I have no voice here, no. It
has always been the case. I'm a shadow
raised for milk and meat like any goat,
a kid-maker. I'm not even halfway
human; my only comfort is the shade

I follow. Shadows don't exist in shade.
So I erase myself from the village
more fleabitten and sore each day, halfway
home, growing more than leaf and fruit. It
makes good sense: we will dissolve, the goat
and I, and soon. What you'll find is the shadow,

pungent faint traces, hoofprints and the shadow
of ghostly orbit through the absent shade,
and lingering too the scent of Holy Goat
growing stronger, enveloping the village,
exciting itch and scratch, raising hair. It
will permeate, and when all are halfway

demented, and the goat and I halfway
to Heaven, gloating in star-shadow,
and there's nothing anyone can do about it,
and bolting the shutter, pulling the shade
is useless, a weird light will shine; the village
folk will feel their udders fill, like goats.

Their soles cleft and calloused, they'll bleat for shade
and eat whatever they can find. The village
will be made of goat, and goat, and goat.