

GRAHAM BARNHART

Call to Prayer

Closer than a church bell's dismantling. A stillness
raveled rather than torn. I expected violence

brought forth upon good rust and megaphones,
upon command wire, unfastened earth, and buried yellow jugs.

I expected old men around gas-fed heaters
to turn their faces away from me, and children to throw stones,

but not the young girl at the hand pump water well
kneeling beside her bucket to kiss the dirt.

Even the sun arrests its tilting, shade pools at the minaret's base
like thawed ice run out from the stones.

I did not expect the song to be lamb smoke wandering
paper-thin between the furrows of sunset-hammered

rice and poppy—a drifting current of lemon through red wine,
a ribbon sometimes

touching the lips—obliging the lips to touch the hands,
the forehead the ground.