

LEE SHARKEY

Self-Portrait

—Käthe Kollwitz (1923)

I secretly expected God would provide a ram for the sacrifice,
that *willingness* to sacrifice would be enough.

The bone truth: I am the woman who sent her son to war.

I kneel. His blood drains through me. “Mother” spills to the ground.
It is so. I am none.

What’s needed: sure mind in a sure body, that I may go on working
as a cow grazes, the barn a dim idea in the distance,

the life light the one light burning—go on with the work to its end.

I bend to the head I chisel in wood, a woman watching,
unmoving, no secret in her, just lines to rend, render me,

mouth shut, everything wholly felt, determined
to bend the sacrifice to my will.