

First Microscope

Fixed on fly
wing
compound
eye.

Your passport
to the Infinite
stamped at five:
Indra's net
of veins, of manifold
mirrors. And on another
slide – God's fish hook:
fly leg, crook and barbs.

Hiraeth

It's not that first dwelling place –
the walkup in your grandparents'
brick house in a Brooklyn neighborhood
half Hasidic Jewish, half Italian.

It's not the painted concrete stoop
or the backyard fence with grapevines.
These things you remember but don't want
again. The images are blurred

like the street from the kitchen window
steamed by your mother's cooking.
The hurricane door in the backyard
that grey wedge of mystery you knew

was portal to the Underworld
of the cellar, with its must
of wine casks. That comes closer.
Once in a while those steel doors

yawned, propped open, scared
but beckoned you. Maybe now
it's that you long for –

that way you felt invited by the dark.

Nature Writing Class

The students forage for signs. House sparrows
flit among strawberry bushes
just a few scarlet fruits

still hanging. A woodchuck startles
whistles
trundles fat rolls
rears
a moment
watches as we watch.

The girl who never speaks
dallies with a salamander
browser in brown leaves.

Ha ha –
a woodpecker's tapping a concrete post!

Someone holds up a spruce cone stripped of scales
by squirrels. Sow, seek, eat, and scatter –
when will this rummage cease and what will come of it?

Cedar Creek. We humans, on a bridge between two hungers:
A kingfisher flings his rattle-cry, fish rise
to damselflies, to trouble our reflections.

Scenes from my Daughter's Childhood

I. TO MY DAUGHTER THE CLIMBER OF TREES

At four your refuge was the one
ancient apple tree you played in
that had just the twist of trunk
to hold your dreams. It was the only
world you needed. How I wanted
to preserve that gnarled old tree
for you, and you for it.
But the neighbor's ire at your play
(they were *his* woods after all) moved him
to cut it down. You wept, I offered comfort,
but could not stop time
from doing what it does to all of us.
I write this after staring at a photo, "Anna 3,"
of a young woman perched in a sapling
lithe as she is. Her back is arched, eyes
shuttered to remain outside of time
within that frame.

II. TO MY DAUGHTER THE VETERINARIAN ON HER FORTIETH BIRTHDAY

I

Remember your fifth birthday party? Between the opening
of the presents and the candled cake, one of our cats
darted past you and your little group of friends,
the limp brown body of a chipmunk in its mouth. I seized the cat
and forced her to drop her prey. The chipmunk lay unmoving,
drawing gasps from all six girls. From you, big tears.
But I saw a whisker twitch, so I sent you in
for peanut butter. I dipped a twig and dabbed the chipmunk's nose,
and PRESTO! her eyes opened. One quick leap
and gone, under rhododendrons. All six girls laughed and hugged
and we had the cake.

II

Weeks later, we drove by a road-killed
fat raccoon. Recent, by the look of him, still glossy,
silver and black fur bristling. Stop the car daddy!
Stop! Get peanut butter!

III. MY DAUGHTER'S SURGERIES

At five you'd plumb the cat-killed
chipmunk with a pair of sharp sticks,

open its limp body, pluck out tiny organs
till you found the bright red berry of the heart.

"To see how it looks inside," you'd say.
And now, your still-small fingers

pull back shuddering skin and muscle panels,
reach deep into the rooms of horses' sides

like throwing open shutters after a storm.
Your own heart's strong enough

to beat for two, a thousand pounds of beast
suspended in your sling and all your hundred

fire and fiber and nerve, as counterweight.