

the whole ride home from the butterfly house

she makes small wind where she pulses
on my arm.
i'm a flower with magenta petals.
the whole ride home, i kiss
my eyelashes to my arm hair.
and can't quite replicate the hesitant
brush of spindle legs.
in the back seat, i hold my hand
up to the blue glass and i
squint through the stretched skin
between my thumb and first finger.
i'm orangey see-through with tiny veins.
my hand is a hatching chick under the incubator
light. i'm almost as iris as the mosaic
wings. i'm sun warm.
i want to pollinate.
from the front seat, my grandma sings.
from the front seat, my mom feeds me animal crackers.
i lick them to make
sugar water.

Classification

Am I a repetition? What's the difference
between the *Coccinella septempunctata* and the *Harmonia axyridis*?
One means luck, the other infestation.
What separates the lady and the bug?
Not even a hyphen.

I'm hyphenate, middled.
I remain larval, hesitant to pupate.
Taxonomy stops me.
How far from Kingdom must I go?
Genus is more specific than family but more general than species. Shouldn't

family be last?
Omniscient? The inescapable? The most telling?
Family seems to me the bottom-out, where the chart cinches, hourglassed.
That little funnel where the answers are supposed to make themselves
Latinize and italicized, known. Where I'm to be told: I am what we are.

That's why I pause, cautious to cycle
Again all we've done. All we are.
Do you portend me every time?
Classify me, please, I need to know, but also
Let me remain.

Poet's End

Dylan Thomas wrote, "Do not go gentle into that good night."
I wish I could ask him to clarify: Does it count as
Rage, raging against the dying of the light
If they give you Ativan?
If you didn't ask for it? If they knocked it into your shin as you thrashed? If you had a plan:
No ambulance no hospital no Ativan?
But no one listened?
Does it count
If she lived as you wrote?
Dylan, tell me, did she fail to do as you wished? She wanted her end to be a poet's.
Isn't wanting enough?
Learning how to write again she began a poem: "Mother was a lesbian" and
Penciled into quaking being the Wisconsin woods of her youth.
And an orchid.
And the beige hostility of a single room, an entrapment.
In a spiral bound notebook, the 99¢ kind.
Why couldn't we have gotten her a pen?
Something leather-bound?
They rejected every manuscript.
Would they take them now?
If they knew what we know? That hers was a disease less than one in a million?
That her visions must've been Dostoevskian, Byronic? (Epilepsy is as close as I can get to
comparison. There's no comparing.) That fitful conditions of the mind make for the best writers
and
Calcium came to coat hers
Ten years faster than she said it would?
Hers was a best of her generation; she would've had Allen howling had she been
Audible.
Husband gone for another, wife in apron, love of words, strict with self, a regular Sylvia.
Her layers were lived in, as Stanley instructed, and she never littered.
She lived as she read. *Dream Work*,
The Grapes of Wrath. She was a Depression child, frugal with everything:
Floss picks, orange peels, even steps and breaths.
Rainer Maria Rilke's only novel was delivered to my house (a small mistake at checkout) and
coveted by me as containing
Answers.
My greed kept it from her shelf.
It was I who failed her. She who gave everything.
Who built Noah's Ark with blocks,
Who showed me *Overboard* and *Weekend at Bernie's*,
Who rode a camel,
Who rode out the Sichuan earthquake.
I ask myself if Rilke could've taught her an end.
If an end can be taught.

Teach me, someone, please.

new room facing east

(highland park, around christmas.
it may have been icy. i wasn't there, i don't know.)

guest room facing east
and one of me, circa 1997, in bed, blissed.

actually, two,
two of me, bliss in two parts, and

one of me is mother. one of me is father now in wellesley.
my hands smell of metal,

pyrite, because so much has gotten away,
and no prescription for adderall. no plasters, either.

i try to hold hands with each of me
to show that i've grown,

that i am at the same time here and there, but
where are my loose hairs?

that i brush out and rub together and keep?
to show shedding and also to create something out of me in my

new room (durham. smelling of swamp, different but still) facing east?
and one of me, circa now, right now, in bed, missed.

Note: This poem results from a found poem exercise. The title, as well as some of the lines ("lying in bed, blissed," "my hands smell of metal, pyrite," and "no prescription for adderall") are indebted to the 2018-2019 Sarah Lawrence College and Bedford Hills Combined Course and their zuihitsu, *Rare Things*.