

## Riddle

The ice has vanished from the smoldering  
stream, weeping fingers of winter slid  
from the splintered trees.

The canyon I am learning through my feet  
is secretive and dull, its bluefire gifting  
the swelling city and lake. Spring is late  
here and melancholy . . .

this morning a mountain lion leapt  
down the narrow road  
looking for something to kill.

My child is troubled with fears  
of abandonment. How will you find me  
if I am lost here, or here? She pushes  
her face into the wind,  
perhaps remembering another rush  
of air, a freefall, an entry of blood, water  
and loss.

I learned early the limits of love.  
Children can be given only the residue  
of a heart struggling to heal itself,  
the remainder of a spirit seared with passion  
and ambition.

And does it matter if I croon to this child

I will never leave your bright eyes, your  
sturdy little body?

She knows a lie. She  
must turn from the hunter,  
run home  
with lilacs in her teeth.

—Nancy Baird