

## CAT-WALK

Her name is Nefertiti, this tabby  
asserting ancient wiseness  
beyond our alley, suspending  
all my substance against the wall  
in her gaze-- secret lenses  
of Alice's looking glass eye-level,  
unguarded for an instant.  
Always I've known if I moved with dark  
quick as light I could descend  
one of those twin tunnels when they opened  
to receive impatient night.

As I entered, (did she know?)  
the passage vibrated, still hot  
from her last leap atop the bookcase.  
My trackless feet swirled faint smells  
of fennel and toadflax. Tiny sparks flared,  
died deeper in iris mazes of mist  
and whispers of small things hiding  
in crevices. Ahead, the shafts converged

in a vaulted hall of oak bark, sun-stain,  
leaf-shine. Joy was magneto rhythm, prongs  
of root forks and moonlight. A trophy room  
was collaged with grasshoppers,  
shrews, bright wings. Shelves held stacks  
of hoarded summers and adventures  
wrapped in fur or sensuous string.  
Convolutions of shapes and sounds flowed  
on a weft of black, approaching, receding  
on a vector of velvet. Green was a flavor  
and all other eyes a strong scent.  
Motion was a prolonged spring, a dive  
that never reached water.

Deeper was slow cryptic drumming,  
a flash of gilt and ebony  
lancing through scorched grass  
dissolving in jungle dusk.

Another door: A sly stir in a chamber  
beyond, a brink, a river noise,  
a rush of olive and spicewood.  
At my feet a beetle. No, a scarab jewel!  
And I returned to my place  
without crossing the Nile.