

## In my childhood

In my childhood insects leave pieces of themselves  
everywhere Spherical eggs on a leaf Moth cocoon  
with exit hole (Papery and brown) The papery  
circles of a wasps' nest Architecture held by a  
thin stem Webs Dense as cotton wads Spread  
like an elegant hand Ripped Or holding drops  
of water A cicada skin with a slit in the back  
See-through (A complicated yellowing window) A wax  
honeycomb suspended in a jar of honey Gather  
what we are fond of Exterminate the remainder  
In my childhood I gather what I'm fond of  
at 1221 Merriewood Dr 4.06 miles from the Brio Superfund Site  
Declared on March 31, 1989 4 1/2 months before  
I entered kindergarten to learn to read my way  
(one day) through a Wikipedia page listing the toxins:  
copper, vinyl chloride, 1,1,2-trichloroethane, fluorene,

styrene, ethylbenzene, toluene, benzene, and more  
Satisfying diagrams show how the molecules fit  
Pink color, orange color, blue color     $\text{CH}_3$   
 $\text{C}_6\text{H}_6$     I admire how a scientist puts a comma  
in the middle of a word    I like how he hangs a small  
number under a letter    Red color, purple color  
Hoops and stars    “Aromatic hydrocarbons”  
“Known human carcinogen”    Opening a door on my memory  
So-and-so’s wide blue eyes    His brother’s wide brown eyes  
“I’m a Brio kid,” he says, meaning    *We lived in the*  
*contamination zone*    *and*    Health studies shuttered  
due to low participation    Yearly packets of money  
for the remainder of your lives    The child carries  
the mutation and the man dies    It’s bucolic  
where they razed the houses    Somehow it’s legal  
for cows to graze on it    A host of pretty wildflowers

Luxuriant, luscious grasses nodding their broad  
shaggy heads    At sunset hordes of bats pour  
from under the bridge at Dixie Farm and Beamer  
In the dark a longhorn lifts and turns his burdensome head  
In my childhood I    the refinery operates from 1957–1982  
“unprocessed petroleum and waste materials”    “12 large earthen pits”  
“groundwater”    In my childhood I scramble out from  
the creek water    spooling    brown    opaque    and placid  
Hiding something, maybe    An alligator or a snake  
Clambering out through the mud and sludge  
Dangling from a large pipe of some type    A patch of  
wilderness    among the strip malls and asphalt  
Green light    green trees    I gather a doll-size bouquet  
of clover    A roly-poly pools in my palm    In my childhood  
insects leave pieces of themselves    emissaries from  
a natural world    Many fewer each year

We could not live in peace    Laying out pipes and lines  
and cement roadways and houses weighing many  
thousands of pounds    In my childhood  
we entered the tunnels of the future    Emissaries  
from a dwindling world    Searching for an  
entrance to get back to    through tainted sludge and water