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## Bark Beetle Tracks

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BARK BEETLE TRACKS

As we learned to read,  
those strange, tidy marks on the page  
bore little evidence of the cat's  
stiff whiskers, or the smell the dog  
left steaming by the road.

No hint of the fire off  
mother's comb and hair,  
or the smoke of father's breath.

Cold fingers of baptistry water  
clutched our genitals  
and drowned our eyes,  
masking the big idea that love  
was everywhere and baffling and good.

By the time we could scrawl  
clumsy messages, heirs  
to Plato, Moses, Seneca, we tried  
to guess how puffs of smoke  
a friend could see across the county  
might announce "we're here"  
or "the land is breathing."

Inside snug bark of paper birch  
exploded by the splitting maul  
are weird, truncated phrases,  
wild, existential messages,  
the signal, smut and poetry of a species.