

As A Child

As a child I'd test the borders
of the paths I walked.

The rough imposing brickwork
of alley walls at speed
might graze a passing arm or knee
but slowly walking
I could warm my fingertips
dragged across the course red clay
then cool them in the smooth gray lines
of thumb-wide mortar grooves.

With a clacking stick
Tripping across overlapping slats
I'd pass tall timber fences,
wanting to feel the rhythmic thud
with my fingers
but fearing splinters.
When I spotted knot holes
I would stop and step close,
spying uncanny gardens.
Unfamiliar toys discarded in familiar ways
and children's clothes on lines
hung by a mother not mine.

Paths beyond the village
were roughly sketched,
the feathers of long grass leaned in
to hiss like silk against my shins.
The hulking bramble's threat of thorn
would curve my steps away
then tempt me back with leaf-lined portals,
proscenium arches over cool damp hollows
where ants charted their own paths
between bird bone dioramas
and adulthood's bewildering debris.