

This

is grass, this a table, this a tree.

All nod: *yes, yes* (complacent, assured)

but a shadow slides over it, over the whole
known world: not a tree, a shadow tree, and the black crows
big as cats who strut at its feet are the real messengers,
jabbing for grubs, clasp the smooth ovals of pecans in their beaks,

(the witness speaks a mirror movement)

or if not messengers, then what? A figure
too neat, easily assimilated, just a way to fit the unknown
into our lexicon: *to name*: feel safer: *accommodate*

What if, in the shadow life of the body, a million processes
firing in all directions—unseen, internal—one direction
goes off track, strikes out on its own path—
a cell *thinking for itself*

This: crow, this: elementary school

This: a mother who knows what she knows. Whose insides churn all day. Who
wants to sing the song of *everything is all right*. Who watches like a hawk.

(the witness finds the stillness inside a bell)

This is just the usual *how do I keep my child safe?* song. She sees shadows
sliding over the lawn furniture, across the child's bright head,
the crisp sycamore leaves scattered over the grass.

All nod, *yes, yes*. We agree. We engage in the visible world
as if we know it is real.

This is the felicity of art. The charade that it will save us.

The crows are big as dogs, they lumber across the street, they are the violinists in the quartet, black suitcoats flapping as they play, half rising from their chairs.

Their feathers are layered, shiny: *What else would you expect?* They lumber across the asphalt. The oval shells of pecans are dun, wedging open yellow beaks.

Echinacea: The dawn cries open in a frost of cornflowers: Plath said that. Something like that.

One cell an errant explorer, a runaway: we can't see it take its turn, off the track.

The crape myrtle's firework of pink, its shatterings, its ashes, skirted on the ground.

No, it was *a forest of frost, a dawn of cornflowers*.

(The habit of language cranking up.)

The blaze of pink, the oversized commas of shiny black hiccup across the field of pink, the lemon of their beaks: They barely turn as the child runs toward them.

By agreeing, can we believe it into being?

Her mother floats in her bed in the Intensive Care Unit, a boat on calm water. She is in another world.

(the witness looks to the sky)

Sycamore leaves, an arroyo of green and darker green, shifting backdrop
riding a late breeze, the theatre of afternoon.

It is the illusion of time. That it is linear. That it moves forward, a trajectory.
That there is a future.

She doesn't float. A moth pinned to the display sheet. Sheet of bed.
What time is it? she asks. She looks out the window.
Is it night or day?

That it is a fancy bed doesn't matter.