

## When The Muses can't be bothered

That is when I visit their mother,  
skipping past the post and wire fence,  
to a house of cold milk, warm cookies made with butter.  
But first, a mutual wriggle inside the non-judgmental bird-dog cage,  
its muddy riot of paws, tailslap, wet kisses,  
down to my best friend Billy's I-dare-ya pegleg balancing act at the rail yard,  
past Charlotte's Daddy's hive-inducing tangy, Concord grapevine arbor,  
onward to Mrs. Pinsky's gnarled, forgiving claw of a cherry tree,  
then "the run" an arm's-length reach from the bad man's gate—  
will the cops nab him this time—as they chase him half-naked down the alley?

Done! Now, flopping near the deep and pale purple iris bed  
their weary mother will tend—soon as she returns from work,  
pulls off her brown shoes, sighs, strokes the neighborhood tom cat,  
who has straggled up to her slanted stoop, just like me,  
wearing a mouse-eating grin.

I could go on, but The Muses might be listening.  
They are sophisticates. Ashamed of her, with her  
faded housedress, her chin wart, her birdbath, her straight path  
to the trash bin of what might have been,  
her shabbily asphalt-shingled house, ringed  
by cheap perfume-blending, I-beam-smelting, can-lid stamping factories.  
They are her fair-weather daughters,  
flinging derision as they toss their glittery manes,

even as Mnemosyne rakes her silvery hair,  
reaches out a steady hand,  
fine tunes her radio's scratchy sound,  
looks skyward for a good, hard rain.

BARBARA HOBBIE