

LYNN PEDERSEN

A Catalog of What We're Not Meant to See

Goethe demanded that science should always hold to the human scale. He opposed the use of the microscope, since he believed that what cannot be seen with the naked eye should not be seen, and that what is hidden from us is hidden for a purpose.

John Banville

If something is hidden from us for a purpose, no wonder
this feeling of always having lost something or someone,
of satisfaction or completion just
around the corner or under the pillows
or between the floorboards, something
escaping us in the wind.

Pocked edge of a razor, raw weave of linen or silk,
sparks struck from flint or steel,
six-branched figures formed on the surface of urine by freezing,
the stinging tips of nettles.

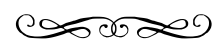
And the minute bodies that live among us: mites, a louse, a flea,
the beard of a wild oat,
teeth of a snail, wings of a fly,
the eggs of silk worms,
blue mold.

We're left with what's immediately above and below
and around us—bulk of table and chair.

Though as years go on...you find less
and less it's things that you want, that you believe in.
Instead, it's departure and return: the slip of winter.

No wonder Robert Hooke (no friend of Goethe's)
built a telescope as high as a house
to make up for man's meek senses, discovered
seventy-eight stars in the Pleiades cluster,
more than twice as many as Galileo had counted.

What Goethe especially hated
was Hooke's fibril structure of cells, the hollowness of cork:
its series of tiny boxes that imply
what holds us together is nothing.



ABOUT LYNN PEDERSEN

Lynn Pedersen's poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in *New England Review*, *Ecotone*, *Poet Lore*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Palo Alto Review*. Her chapbook, *Theories of Rain*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2009. A graduate of the Vermont College of Fine Arts, she lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Her website is located at lynnpedersen.wordpress.com.

Bibliographic notes:

- The epigraph is drawn from John Banville's essay, "Beauty, Charm, and Strangeness: Science as Metaphor," published in *Science* (July 3, 1998) and online at m.sciencemag.org/content/281/5373/40.full.
- Source material for the poem is from Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* (1665) available through Project Gutenberg at www.gutenberg.org/files/15491/15491-h/15491-h.htm.

