

LISA GLUSKIN

*Spelling Test*

Outside rained over the tetherballs,  
but here I held the world. The joy  
of getting it down, down right,  
the sharp purple scent of page  
under pen—I scratched away  
in love with the word.

Number six: squirrel.  
*Squirrel*. It rode the curves,  
rolled round the vowel. Again: *squirrel*.  
Twisted open in the repetition—  
past a small thing quivering. Whiskers,  
acorns in a picture book. Pulled into  
a turning whorl of sound.

*Squirrel*. The heady scent of what we call  
what we call—by then no more word  
than sound, no more sound than itself.

Pure strangeness, and the sweep  
of the clock. I handed back my page,  
its blank blurred lines. Then the bell,  
the door. Tall grass at the edge of the blacktop.

Nothing could be named, though we moved our lips.