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Bad Memory

Kim Addonizio

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KIM ADDONIZIO

Bad Memory

Think of all your brain once knew
but keeps from you now:
the formula for mercury,
why Venice turned so savagely on Savonarola,
the origin of the phrase *Cadmean victory*.

Think of the nights with what's-his-face,
feeling you'd die if he left you,
the books you thought would improve you,
all dropped like rotted fruit
from the branches of your dendrites

in the blighted orchard of your cerebellum.
But maybe *cerebellum* is inaccurate
given that you can't remember much about the brain—
just a few words survive from junior high
along with a hazy recollection

of a frog you once had to slit open
to draw what was hidden inside.
Mercifully, whatever was there—
ova, viscera, a tiny, still-throbbing heart—
has been loaded onto a C-47

and airlifted to a faraway country.
Think of all the things
your brain has spared you in its wisdom,
locking up its little shop of horrors,
pulling closed its heavy iron gate.