

Diatom

To children, I am green lips
or sick diamond, I'm chipped Perrier
glass washed translucent. I'm rubbed
slick in their fists, and pailed
with zebra mussel and bulrush.

Biologists say I'm no jewel. They trace
my heritage in tables of slate.
Science spends its cheers only on the new.
I'm safe-housed in silica, a hundred chloroplasts
sucking up sun. My skin offers no chink
for claw or beak. But if my cells could burst

from this sheath, they'd stretch
into limbs and waltz along the silt.
Let me learn to dance in the roll
of inflow. Let me be a comet
in a muskeg of stars.