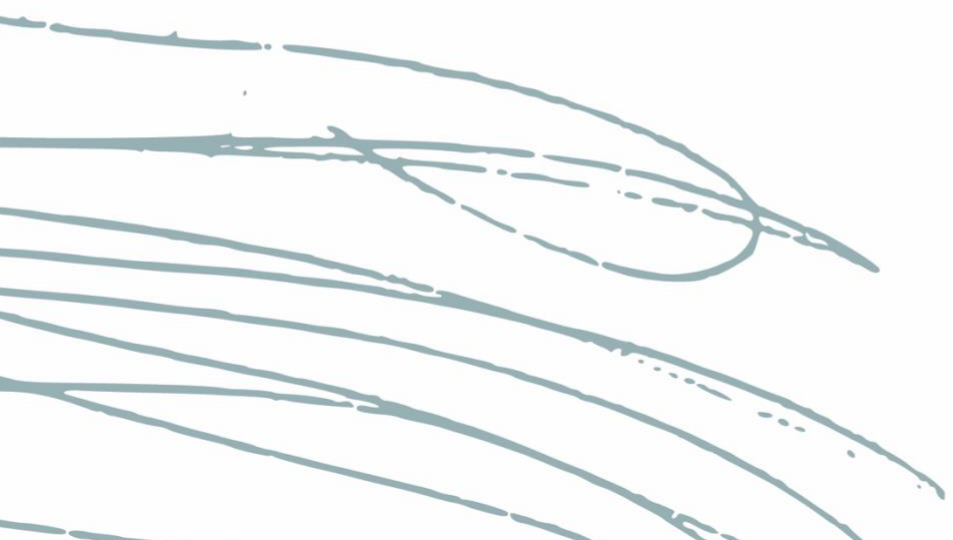


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American Life *in* Poetry



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BY Kwame Dawes

Kimiko Hahn's father was born and raised in Wisconsin. A place that has now become part of his daughter's imagination. She herself is a woman of many arrivals and departures, and thus a woman fascinated by the complex meaning of "home", as she shows here in this sonnet. The life-cycle of the cicada offers a splendid opportunity for her to speak of childhood, maturation and change as part of the parent-child experience.

Reckless Sonnet No. 8

My father, as a boy in Milwaukee, thought
the cicada's cry was the whir from a live wire--
not from muscles on the sides of an insect
vibrating against an outer membrane. Strange though
that, because they have no ears, no one knows why
the males cry so doggedly into the gray air.
Not strange that the young live underground sucking sap from tree roots
for seventeen years. A long, charmed childhood
not unlike one in a Great Lake town where at dusk
you'd pack up swimsuit, shake sand off your towel
and head back to the lights in the two-family houses
lining the streets. Where the family sat around the radio.
And the parents argued over their son and daughter
until each left for good. To cry in the air.

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