

The Gift

If you think mirrors
only reflect your own image
back to you, think again.

Rainbows overflowing
in a plastic bucket,
coffee grounds taking

on “S” and “L’s” shapes
in their own bitter language.
I’ve seen it all.

A blue feather atop
a silver scale just sitting
there registering time.

At first, these images
skimmed the surface
of glass, but then I felt

puppet strings between
my hands as if I were
pulling each image into view.

Or were they pulling me?
Pulling me into scenes
of tenderness and loss:

a man buttoning
up his grandson’s shoes,
A little girl kneeling on

the sidewalk to feed a dog.
An old widow whispering
into the knot of an oak tree.

So you’ll understand,
then, why that day in July
in Italy years ago when my sister

stepped off the train
—so thin, so unrecognizable—
I held up a hand mirror.

Not so she could see

what she had learned to hate.
But to offer up another

distant world: the one
within her. Teeming. Alive.
Glinting. Knife-like.