

Subhadramati

Doors

for my nephew, Jack

Before your birth each tiny pinkie grew
a still more tiny version of itself;
a twiglet branching from the smallest twig
whose perfect fingernail shone like a moon.
The doctors intervened (of course) and all
they left were two small bumps to prove where once
your perfect useless digits were, and so
I'd half-forgotten till this morning's finding
of a creature, sleek and plump as any mouse,
snug in the groove the sliding door slides into.

Whatever forces drew it to the moon
last night have failed to guide it home again
and so it clings with blackened wizened hands,
the umbrellas of its wings collapsed,
the extra thumb for climbing, crawling, cleaning
bat-ears, still. And though its body quivers once,
my creature never wakes as I caress
its backbone's span with giant finger; it sleeps
as though in all this world of sliding doors
there never was, nor could be, any danger.