

Janet McNally

## Mothers, We Are Gone

The way out of the woods is a honeyed  
square of light. Why do you forget this

as soon as the leaves fan closed? Stay,  
children, where the sod offers crabgrass

and daisies, dandelions not yet gone  
to seed. The forest yawns wide

and then narrows, oak roots weave  
like lace through its soil. Watch for nets

of ivy, for myrtle flowers winding iridescent  
through the dirt. You won't escape this

gilded aviary, this place of birdsong  
and fern-frond and dark echoing brook.

The smallest of you will make handprints  
in shore moss, faint stars left five-pointed

for no one to see. Back home, your mothers  
will caress the black glass of quiet

night, obsidian made of anger, cooled  
in river stone shapes. They'll hum songs

that crumble long before they reach their ends.  
All the wrong birds will hear their dreams.

