

LEONARD KRESS

Law of Resemblances

An entire August when I was five
I couldn't catch my breath whenever
it occurred to me that I was breathing.

My mother dragged me, cutting through
the neighbors' yards, to our family doctor,
a gruff homeopath, with a whole wall

of drawers (mortised oak and cherry)
that death-rattled with unmarked pellets
he'd spill into tiny envelopes, folded

as if by some fastidious hobbyist
fitting caps on a priceless collection
of miniature dolls or hummels.

He was also the one who dispensed sugar cubes
of Salk vaccine—when the whole world
lined up single-file up and down the block,

only to watch his son whip by, tires screeching,
his son, the contaminant of our development.
There he was, Sunday mornings for all to spot,

his souped-up Olds half on and off
the complacencies of a soft shoulder—
sleeping off a weekend binge, his shoeless foot

relinquished through a cracked side vent.
I had no asthma, the doctor insisted, no ragweed
or hay fever, nothing more than a case

of too much consciousness—disease
which becomes its own cure, as like cures
like. When she was barely half a year,

my daughter's eyes turned in, a *tropia*
unrelated to figures of speech.
She needed surgery, a muscle snipped,

a suture here and there, her eyeball
momentarily freed from its socket.
The dosages the doctor gave were infinitesimal.

When he retired, he spent his days wrapping
sprains for the high school football team—
the team from which his son was kicked

for smoking dope, a sequence ending
when he was drafted and killed in Vietnam.
When she emerged, hours after her operation,

from the deep sleeping spell they put on her,
she woke up rooting for the breast, and her first
tears, cranking up to a wail, were blood.