Whatever my father ever asked for
was slight and not even
that he be remembered, but that the sound of the wheels
moved evenly, the toasting of the bread,
the scrambling of the eggs,
the frying of the bacon,
he taught me to do all slowly carefully
to avoid the pain that could come might come
of crashing, burning, curling

My children are always sleeping when I cry
I kiss them slowly
I spend a kiss on the cheek or forehead
and my stray hair tickles an eyelid.
    They snore. And as they sleep
I steal the minute out of their lives
when they did not even consider loving me.
    The first one
bangs an arm against the headboard, cheap wrought iron,
phony imitation clang clang. The second
sweaty at the ears and hair in a flange across
the pillowcase might move but not wake.
    The husband wakes with a kiss
so I must not kiss.
How beautiful their bare hands in the air!

Yes, yes, father, I remember.
Not *can I? can I?*

but may I may I may I