

*I DREAMT MY DAUGHTER WAS A CHILD AGAIN**[35 lines]*

I dreamt my daughter was a child again

playing with her own children in the garden of our old house

and they were all three around the same age,

somewhere between nine and eleven, two girls and a boy.

This seemed at the same time both perfectly natural and inexpressibly

strange: mesmerizing, beautiful, and sad.

The children shared a certain gravity, and grace.

They were alike in features, gestures, cries, deeply immersed

in the searching, calibrating tasks of childhood as they found their place,

learned their moves, challenged their given status and made up

their future lives. And I wanted so very much to protect her

from something - my daughter, I mean – but in the dream

I was powerless either to act or speak out.

Her face, a stormy Bellini angel outlined against the trees,

was enigmatic, focused on the game, deep in the moment,

single-minded - a look I rarely see in her more adult repertoire

of haste, anxiety, her promise always to speak tomorrow,

or maybe the day after. Never now. And I comply.

[I DREAMT MY DAUGHTER.....]

Life happens as you look the other way.

Her own failures as a mother are, I know,
intimately bound up with mine when she, my only child,
great gift of my youth, arrived to find me riding high
on the full flood of life, too much taken up with her inconstant
father, careless, self-involved, my youthful years a fugue of hunger,
chasing after things unknown. And in my dream I understood
that what I wanted so very much to protect her from
was my own younger self.

I ached to fold her back inside my heart.

But one word spoken, one wrong move on my part,
and the spell is broken. So in my dream, as in my life,
I stay where I am, silent. This all seems at the same time
both perfectly natural and inexpressibly strange:
mesmerizing, unalterable, and sad.

And there on the darkening grass
my child and hers, untouched as yet by time, dance on.