

Anatomy Lesson

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To understand the heart
 you've got to memorize arteries, vessels,
 and which goes where, which is red
 and which is blue, what's likely to pop open--
 is it in your head or behind your wings
 or the one down low in the snake path
 of food that winds around the tangle
 of bladder, liver, spleen.

Kidneys, too, the root of the whole thing,
 the seat of life -- your chi,
 that thrust of breath from the small of your back.
 Guard it, especially in wind with damp heat rising
 and those sudden storms that cool
 afternoon sweat from your forehead
 before time works its way in
 to where thoughts become memories or dreams.

You see? At last you understand,
 anatomy stacked like a ladder from your toes
 right up your knees and elbows
 and each footstep of a rib
 until you're in your head again
 with words for every thing, each one.