

Barnet Knoll Brook

by [Sydney Lea](#) in the [November 2, 2004](#) issue

—in a time of war

Here's what's to be read, or part of it,
in mud by the brook after last night's storm—
storm that scrawled itself on sky
in color and light, here then gone.

It was matchless. Thus I won't even try
to speak of such flash. No, back to the mud,
to the scrimshaw of busiest rodents—voles,
mice—and the paired stabs of weasel,

and the lissome trail of a gaunt angleworm,
who lies there still, just under the brush,
carnal pink or its tail showing out.
Small gnats make a veil on my face.

I choose not even to wave them away.
But for my mild heavings of chest
after the climb to this upland water,
the still of the place is absolute,

and the fullness too: the water striders
in the pool above the fortuitous dam
of sticks and debris are water striders
up and down: they stand on themselves

on the surface reflection, foot to foot.
How many grains of sand in the world?
So one of my daughters wanted to know
in her infancy. "A gadzillion," I'd say.

"I love you more than that," she'd answer.
What have I ever done to earn blessing?
I choose to believe in grace, believe
the splendors of the universe

lie not in my eye but rather subsume me,
small drab me, one part of so many.
Beauty not in my eye but including my eye,
which tonight may see the cavalcade

of star and planet or cloud again, gravid.
When I consider all this, *What is man,*
that thou art mindful of him? and the son
of man, that thou visitest him? It seems right

to have knelt, although one kneels by habit
by this brook. The pinespills sunk to its streamstones
would take my lifetime to tally up,
and more would keep coming, please God, keep coming.