

Deep Thirst

In what is perhaps the most bourgeois moment of my life
I'm pulling into the parking lot of a suburban Whole Foods,
my red sunglasses on, drinking from a bottle of Pellegrino,

which I refer to not as seltzer or even sparkling water,
but as Pellegrino. Oh Lord, how deeply have I fallen
into the stereotype of the upper middle class, stay-at-home mom.

Who, among my relatives two generations removed,
would even recognize me as they trudged wearily
back home, coaldust in their hair, in every deep seam

in their skin, their eyes contracting in the daylight?
When they moved from the collieries of England
to Ohio and West Virginia, did they have in mind

offspring that might someday listen to endless hours of NPR
while fretting about the wine selection with a weekend's dinner?
How galling for them, who managed vibrant backyard gardens

in lots that hardly had backyards, to think of me,
who can hardly manage to microwave correctly,
who hasn't eaten meat in twenty-three years.

I hate to admit how badly I fit into my own world,
but all the same I'd do far worse in theirs, not knowing
how to really get my hands dirty anymore. Even after

playing in the sandbox with my kids I pull a wipe
out of my bag, which has in it as well as
more Pellegrino, the wooden chopsticks

I saved from the sushi lunch I treated myself to.
I've got to be a walking sign of the apocalypse,
the moral collapse of America, the whole nine yards.

If so, I may as well polish off the last of the Pellegrino,
whose Italian waters originate from a layer of rock
one thousand, three hundred feet below the surface.