Kinship

Nava Fader
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What is my birthright, surely
I have the weight of years, mother,
grandmother, history to balance
solitude, the feeling that you are a body
entirely surrounded by water and afraid
of the water.
How many concentric circles
can I draw? How many will it take
to feel some
kinship, some gravity, the pull
a planet puts on a nearby planet,
the neat mathematics of gravity,
an invisible hand wielding
an invisible compass: you go here, and here,
this space is for you.

I can count myself in the food chain, meat-eater, eating
the cow who eats the grass fed by the sun and rain.
I can count myself in the Chain of Being, superior
to animals, inferior to God; the great wheels (Praised be) must turn.

I can measure my time, presently Post
Ice Age, now the Northern Star is Polaris, Alpha
is Ursa Minor, this is how I measure
my horizon. Well.
I looked up the name. I just know it as
part of my sky. It changes and
I can't tell how.
How
do I call myself?
By my country, by my block, by the temper
I get from my father, and red hair I get
from my father's side?
How
do I piece it together, to get my eyes
more than the sum of just my eyes.
Can I get out of it by saying
I am a Scorpio and ravenous,
I am a Jew and afraid,
I am a woman and vulnerable?
Can I wear that get-up, the patchwork
I put on, and sew each thread to my skin
because I say, and history says
those colors are in my skin.
There are many skeins of my story. And my veins run,
sure as an umbilical
to all those places.
But I am more
than the sum of all my parts.
And this strange shape I am
no compass can fathom.
And this loneliness, this logic
that defies all reason, it's two
stubby hands, ten
squat toes, one soft and hard mouth,
a lonely
perfect design.

by Nava Fader