

FABRE

You rip up the animal and I study it alive; . . .
you subject cell and protoplasm to chemical tests,
I study instinct in its loftiest manifestations;
you pry into death, I pry into life.
—J. Henri Fabre, *The Life of the Fly*

On his *harmas* in the valley of the Rhône—
his laboratory light, florescent sky;
his microscope, his unassisted eye—
a patient plotter watches all alone.
In what swift ambushade does he lie prone?
upon what secret doings does he spy?
into what minute mysteries does he pry,
this sentinel of worker, queen, and drone?

All others lose the forest for the trees—
how could they not who lay whole forests low
only to squint at stumps and count their rings,
as if one learns life's truths from lifeless things?
Blind analysts of death will never know
what he knows who looks into life and sees.