

*The Fatman Can't Get A Country
And Western Tune Out Of His Head:
'Mamas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up
(To Be Intertidal Ecologists)'*

When my four year old brings me
his toy specimen jar, the one with the cheap plastic
magnifying glass built into the snap-on top, when he
plops in mismatched valves from two different clams
found on our last trip to the beach,
and when he holds his eye to the examination port,
and when he tells me he wants to be a shell studier
when he grows up, I almost ask him,
“Fisher, can you say ‘malacologist’?”
But I stop because I realize his notion
of “studier” is much bigger than that.
In addition to learning how form follows
function in the morphology of those mollusks
who make a living between the tides,
in addition to dissecting clam siphons
or sketching schematics of bivalve hinges,
he also wants to know how to glue seashells in pretty shapes,
how to color them with magic markers
and decorate them with vivid stickers,
how to make something beautiful
out of something beautiful.

from LOVE POEM