TROUBLE, FLEET AND LIGHT OF WING

Because I've hung moth-nets, the patio
is filled with wings. Papery, hushing
in the dark, wings like shaved tinfoil,
wings fulvous, wings frantic, bodies wing entire.
A fan of veins, silk stretched between,
patchworked, stitched by hairs.
In doubled ranks they bend
from wing to wing, angelic, hundred-eyed.

The mothen meadow each night empties out,
moths rising bedizened and dizzy with pollen
toward the lamp burning—inflamed, incandesced.

Winter last year was long into spring.
I dug the barn floor. Beneath bitter wood,
white larvae tunneled through silage,
blind jaws working, worming sulphurous trails,
sumptuous nests hot, damp as summer's back.

On air-trails now they come, because I've hung
moth-nets. Ultraviolet against the canvas,
they light on the sugaring, burring
their wings. They cling and fluster on the nets,
cluster, fracture, spasm on the bulbs.
One touches flame. Sizzle. Tiny exodus
of smoke. Smell of naphtha.

Lean
in and look—where they wing, tangle,
lit against black sky, they are
lightbearing, falling earthward, starlike,
contagious in passion, star. The star is wormwood.
MISCARRIAGE DICTIONARY

There is no word. We avert our tongues from it.

Ghost-limb: bodily confusion. It \textit{insists}.

Acres of bracken down, hewn, banked for the winter.
I hear it still: the scuttle across the open meadow.

A man whistles, casts shavings to wind.

Vacancy: a hollow, a container of absence. Not the thing itself. \textit{A vacant mouth}.

On the grain floor, the winnowers fan the chaff, the land’s excess.


The seamstresses, the foundry men— language spindles, rotates between their fingers. You are a selvage.
Ode on My Belly Button

My original wound was my deepest:
half-inch divot where the cord shriveled off
and a plunging ache that never scabbed
where my umbilical name sloughed away,—
forgotten now, but it meant Belong. Whole
again and joyful when my ninth-month
belly swelled with genial weight, skin taut,
fullest at the center line where fragile
the navel flattened out, its secret flesh
splayed to surface, until my familiar
agony: headlong and vulnerable,
our mutual attachment already
obsolescing, you inherit your original wound.
—Your original loneliness.

Ode on My Appendix

My old frivolity. How I admired
your gentle defiance in my side, your
droll x-ray like a stuck-out tongue showed
sinews fooled to welcome...what? a tag-end,
embroidery, a thing indifferent.
So I believed. But when you flare up,
packered heretic, my guts clench, bowels
revolt, breath short: you prove the searing
center of my frail cosmology, my
dearest intimate. I pick wistful
at the scar, each whipstitch tugs two grommets
open in my belly. In the body,
in the body's hot memory, in sickness
and in health, there are no adiaphora.
Through weather. Through weather's declensions.
Through spring's steep degrees, through five shapes of snow,
through the thunderhead's sexual green

over green geometrical acreage,
through every stormy declension
of the heart I have cried your name. It is

a histrionic's litany, recited
from this, my usual station: Unrequited.
Where else such sighs and bluster, such tropics

of squalling passion?

*

And what is wind
but a dialect of longing?—: the high
pressure rushing to fill the low, the sky

trying to slake its heats against the earth's
asymptotic cool, its somersaulting cools
against the earth's radiance. All weather

springs from currents of failed desire. No wonder
the wind, when it says anything at all,
howls.

*

O fugitive God, my glorious jilt,

my heart has learned a tempest's grammar
in your pursuit. Listen: it thunders up
its truest, its most hopeless, prayers

for you.