

## 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 *insists*.

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

A man whittles, casts  
shavings to wind.

Vacancy: a hollow, a container  
of absence. Not the thing itself.  
*A vacant mouth.*

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

Absence: makes no contract. A Siamese twin.  
Like insertions of a spider's web—  
when you touch *absence*,  
*presence* vibrates.

The seamstresses, the foundry men—  
language spindles, rotates  
between their fingers. You are a selvage.

Subtraction: land-  
lord. lock. slide. scape.  
fill. fall. grave. mark.

My precious, my priceless . . .  
there is no name for you.

## 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,  
puckered 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?

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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.