

Migration

Cockroaches would crawl
from the space
between her teeth
while no one was looking.
Their glistening shells
would slip through her full-bloom
lips, one after another,
till her sallow skin was on the verge
of disappearing beneath
their insectuous migration.

In the next room, my father
stood on a balance beam. He
was a temple there, a house of cards.
He was a window covered
in moths vying for the glow
of my mother porch light. We couldn't
touch her, just follow
her through the house, sweeping
up those thorned legs and dried
wings as bees colonized in her
lungs and cicadas groaned
in her stomach.

Reaping

How do they communicate?
In circles.
How do they make love?
Separately. How does she touch
him? Sometimes she holds him
like the wheat scrapes
against the sky. Somewhere in Middle
America a field moves all at once,
though the blades are lonely. The sky asks
the grain to *not make a big deal*
out of it. The sky tells the grain *it's not just about*
showing up.

He did his panic-research on her
body, listened for the crickets in her gut
but rolled his eyes every time she complained
of pain. Says he is familiar
with the cicadas in her skull
like he knows the sound of blood
being drawn. Can he remember how brave
she was that afternoon, lying
on the cutting block?

The sky feels right
to the grain, but does it matter?
The blight will come anyway.
The wheat holds up the sky.

Kitchen Poems

I

Do we recycle
these feelings that stick
like oblong stains
on the countertop,
like little pieces
of butter smeared
on the cutting board, like
she clings to every kitchen
she's ever lived in? The drain
collects bits of egg shell
3 days rotten, while she dreams
of sticking her hand down
the garbage disposal, while
the cat paces nervous, trailing
tufts of loose fur
along the windowsill wanting
for the cat in the alley, just as the girl
wants for the kitchen
of her childhood.

II

Our shoes peel off
the floorboards in dried
juice and beer.

We hear the fruit flies' lovemaking
as they dive in and out
of the bottles on the counter
in the honey light.

III

The spaces I occupy get smaller
as I get older. I have
become less than bones.

He left in the night and took the olive
oil, the butter, left some ice packs in the freezer
and some blackened bok choy on the bottom
shelf. He left a silence
as insatiable as rust.

The negative space of hunger
filled the time we could have spent
loving each other

For the next two weeks the only
thing that could be found in the ice
box was a fast-waning handle of honey
whiskey. I gained weight
and wisdom in the wrong
places.