

# Semblance: Screens

By Liz Waldner

A moth lies open and lies  
like an old bleached beech leaf,  
a lean-to between window frame and sill.  
Its death protects a collection of tinier deaths  
and other dirt beneath.  
Although the white paint is water-stained,  
on it death is dirt, and hapless.

The just-severed tiger lily  
is drinking its glass of water, I hope.  
This hope is sere.  
This hope is severe.  
What you ruin ruins you, too  
and so you hope for favor.  
I mean I do.

The underside of a ladybug  
wanders the window. I wander  
the continent, my undercarriage not as evident,  
so go more perilously, it seems to me.  
But I am only me; to you it seems clear  
I mean to disappear, and am mean  
and project on you some ancient fear.

If I were a bug, I hope I wouldn't be  
this giant winged thing, spindly like a crane fly,  
skinny-legged like me, kissing the cold ceiling,  
fumbling for the face of the other, seeking.  
It came in with me last night when I turned on the light.

I lay awake, afraid it would touch my face.

It wants out. I want out, too.  
I thought you a way through.  
Arms wide for wings,  
your suffering mine, twinned.  
Screen. Your unbelief drives me in,  
doubt for dirt, white sheet for sill—  
You don't stay other enough or still  
enough to be likened to.



Liz Waldner grew up in rural Mississippi and earned a BA in mathematics and philosophy at St. John's College and an MFA at the Iowa Writer's Workshop. Waldner's work is known for its formal experimentation, reliance on quotation and pastiche, and often playful rhyme schemes. Using long titles, made-up words, and expansive proselike sentences that change topic quickly and constantly, Waldner's verse, according to poet-critic Stephen Burt, "pays constant homage to the delights of the senses; beside her, most similarly difficult present-day poets seem arid, theoretical, no fun."

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