

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.

Source: *Poetry* (September 2009)