

Very Large Moth

By Craig Arnold

After D.H.L.

Your first thought when the light snaps on and the black wings
clatter about the kitchen is a bat

the clear part of your mind considers rabies the other part
does not consider knows only to startle

and cower away from the slap of its wings though it is soon
clearly not a bat but a moth and harmless

still you are shy of it it clings to the hood of the stove
not black but brown its orange eyes sparkle

like televisions its leg joints are large enough to count
how could you kill it where would you hide the body

a creature so solid must have room for a soul
and if this is so why not in a creature

half its size or half its size again and so on
down to the ants clearly it must be saved

caught in a shopping bag and rushed to the front door
afraid to crush it feeling the plastic rattle

loosened into the night air it batters the porch light
throwing fitful shadows around the landing

That was a really big moth is all you can say to the doorman
who has watched your whole performance with a smile

the half-compassion and half-horror we feel for the creatures
we want not to hurt and prefer not to touch

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

Source: *Poetry* (October 2013)



Craig Arnold earned his BA in English from Yale University and his PhD in creative writing from the University of Utah. In 2009, Arnold traveled to Japan to research volcanoes for a planned book of poetry. In May of that year, he disappeared while hiking on the island of Kuchinoerabujima. In the New York Times, the poet David Orr mourned the loss of Arnold, but noted it would “be a mistake to think of him as a writer silenced before his prime... His shelf space may be smaller than one would wish, but he earned every bit of it.”

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