

Washington University in St. Louis

## Washington University Open Scholarship

---

All Theses and Dissertations (ETDs)

---

1-1-2012

### Wasp Ode

Ran Wang

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/etd>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Wang, Ran, "Wasp Ode" (2012). *All Theses and Dissertations (ETDs)*. 820.  
<https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/etd/820>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact [digital@wumail.wustl.edu](mailto:digital@wumail.wustl.edu).

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Department of English

Writing Program

**Wasp Ode**

by Ran Wang

A thesis presented to the  
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
of Washington University in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
degree of Master of Fine Arts in  
Creative Writing

May 2012

St. Louis, Missouri

## Acknowledgements

Thank you so much to my teachers, Mary Jo Bang, Carl Phillips, Joanna Klink, and Jorie Graham, who taught me to grapple with poetry in ways that stretched my imagination and the limits of what I thought myself capable.

Thank you to Kerin Sulock, Luke Cumberland, Aditi Machado, and Larry Ypil for being such a lovely, generous, and kind workshop.

Thank you to Allan Popa for being mentor, big brother, and friend.

Thank you to Olga Moskvina and Liza Flum for befriending me that day outside of Peter Richards' intro workshop, when I was seventeen and didn't know who else cared about poems.

And thank you to Olga M. for a friendship that feels more real than most things ever are; for memories of dead Soviet actors, noodle wraps, cats and arsenic, blood and snow and wine, visions and revisions; for being there with me as we grow into who we are as people.

Finally, thank you to Anton Khlevitt for always forcing me to be more than the sum of what I was, for seeing the good in people, and for being a beautiful human. May you rest in peace. I miss you, and this manuscript is for you.

## Table of Contents

Story / 6

\*

Swan Song / 12

Practice in the Shadow Room / 13

Small Cries Like Matchflames Taken Into the Mouth Then Swallowed / 14

Elegy for the Body Falling / 15

If We Could / 16

White Borders / 17

Perfectible World / 18

We were the cattle/ not knowing what it was to want such kindness / 20

Elegy for Allowance / 23

Their Mouths Like Cut Jars Catching the Light / 24

Squinting, it Was Hard to Tell / 25

\*

Visitation / 27

Marie Antoinette in a Display of Jellyfish / 28

Microphones, Bread, and Love / 29

Herself in a Landscape of Aster / 30

Elegy for the Body Erased / 31

Alabaster Match / 32

\*

Wasp Ode

*Herself* [Look: wool makes sparks over the eyes] / 34

*The Other* [Yes, she looked like me, the girl who called herself by] / 35

*Herself* [Sometimes, there was a screen, through which it was possible] / 36

*The Other* [We had, following other discoveries] / 37

*Herself* [I'd stretched a sheet out over the screen, like a curtain] / 38

*The Other* [In year twenty of the Republic of Mercy there came to be built] / 39

*Herself* [And each time a thing went missing there was] / 40

*The Other* [When a signal sent collided with a signal from the receiver,] / 41

*The Other* [Like something misplaced followed by the tap that responds] / 42

*Herself* [Because I had, in order to make sense out of nonsense,] / 43

*The Other* [When I was a little kid, my mother made me an anagram] / 44

*Herself* [Once, I made my looking-glass] / 45

\*

Spring Rituals / 47  
Mea Culpa Elegy / 48  
An Exercise / 49  
Come Close to It / 50  
Elegy for the Refusal / 51  
Red Velvet Confessional / 52  
Elegy Addressed / 55

\*

Notes / 56

## Story

We can tell each other things

some days we tell it well

for instance: in the morning the stalks flattened.  
you saw it first.

for instance: when the trees all go in one direction  
we know that there is wind

We knew before the thing happened but  
what good did it do

like learning a nursery rhyme,  
reciting, he was a good horse a good horse

branches bending,  
then flowers  
something flashing in between we looked up

stop for a moment what

tell it over

We read a book out loud

in it, two children go walking.  
then they go missing.

no one knows where it is they go, although  
it is assumed,  
as they are together, that they are happy

what else

they breathe into each others' mouths

one flings a pebble  
the other observes where it lands



On the third day of walking, they come to a field  
that appears strange.

one pulls a train whistle from the ash. one pulls  
a bird's bone from its limb.

twisted, it resembles almost  
a branch.

placed into the mouth,  
it flowers.

one says, feel how hard the knots are  
against the tongue

In the field:

sounds, low, and the swaying  
of each sound like hills broken by  
a sighting of  
one dark animal then  
another.

discrete

if, for every act  
there is an act—

a hand places flowers on the table.

then, a noise.

1)

## Swan Song

When the bells changed, I put them  
in your mouth

I put my hands over

Something shaking within  
that noise as if  
our hands were leaves our long arms  
branches our mouths

If breath could make a peak  
a hook, an arrow, a missile

Something was lost we  
stared at one another as if  
we ourselves were  
the field where it was last rumored  
to have been seen

## Practice in the Shadow Room

To call the body occupied, one had to first occupy—  
wire suspended in an empty room.

Nothing perched on it.

When I touched you again I didn't feel  
your body, exactly,  
but some shape of it held in mind,  
the way I held the rolling pears, their forms  
cast in light. Rolling until we had forgotten  
they were called pear.

You said, *we have to get to the core of it*,  
and we sharpened our knives across the loins.

Gourd-flower, flesh-flower, what passed through  
the bird's mouth and came away, clean.  
What passed beneath the knife, the hand knowing how.

Deep inside the fruit: the cross-cut  
of a hidden star.

## Small Cries Like Matchflames Taken Into the Mouth Then Swallowed

Sometimes a cry would fall, then  
another, just far enough apart to be singular,

the way the trees bordering the edges of the city  
were singular,  
each claiming its own sky, until it was  
merely *tree*,

and between one cry and another,  
there'd be a flutter, like birds  
crumpling midair.

We moved, mouths counting across  
flesh, making roundness  
on flesh, making flare of  
nickel striking stone—roundness of

the unspooling flame, of the widening cut—  
blade flicking the space between the shoulders,  
where the ribbon  
is holding—the encasement—up.

Roundness like a pin  
on the mouth, or leaf ringed with a hole  
in the middle,

which we could make a noise through,  
if we put our lips to the opening.

## Elegy for the Body Falling

There was no consolation in an object  
that is beautiful. No salvation

in an object that is not. The soul,  
a white square on a white canvas

alien to the order of flesh and trees.  
I can't make it fly or sing.

I have pressed my ear to another human  
and heard nothing but white noise,

and even then what I heard was a wiring  
of blood thrown through the torso.

## If We Could

If we could raise a limb—and it  
would spill a shadow—  
if we could raise a cry and it would spill  
a shadow—widened as it tumbled to overtake  
all the sprays of leaves—

we made, touching, a spoke pushed  
from our center—we made,  
touching,  
a wheel pressed into dirt—

spokes spinning broad and firm until  
we did not know how to greet  
our new spaces (flashing,  
tender)—a loom pushing out its slats  
and widening—and all the soft  
thread twisted and stretched,  
into what—



## White Borders

In the snow, we were always waiting,  
we wanted grapevines,

the buds of oranges. Thorns  
that could draw blood in the mouth.

We sometimes felt like  
thieves in a painting,

crouching for chickens, wondering what  
would come chasing out from

beyond the row of small, brittle trees.

## Perfectible World

We were logs of smoke rolling over  
the dark waters. Who could even fetch us.  
We were heavy as the air growing full  
with low-bellied swallows before rain.  
We felt, rolling, the stammer of bells,  
the swing of branches, forgive us  
brass jar smoke, forgive us chimney  
poplar whitened wind. And if  
the curtains we could not cross were girded  
merely by light, could we have widened  
the light until it grew large as the swing  
of a bell coming over the city.

The bells  
that rang, silver and sharp, pressed  
through the night that was always  
coming loose like a floorboard we had  
pried open and never replaced properly,  
so that when we walked across  
the kitchen at night to brew coffee  
there was always that sound of the floor  
opening, shutting. And if, afterwards,  
when the glassy-eyed birds came bursting  
through the windows, (having fed them  
pebbles, flatbread, and twine) we had  
offered them even the scraps of smoke  
that in the heat had grown heavy  
and slicked our arms like tar, would  
a ring of feathers have landed, blue  
as the flash of a stone?

There was  
a certain kind of sadness that could only  
be pressed by others, so when we tried,  
in our basins, to press it ourselves,  
it only grew more undrinkable. The more  
we drank the more we began to bend,  
first under the branches and, slowly, below  
by the waters, until we were the cattle  
not knowing what it was to want  
such kindness. Sometimes a sound  
would fall in a throat and never rise free,  
a violence soft as a petal suddenly  
pinned into place, and only a string  
passed from one to another could tell us

how beautiful it was, then. It was,  
with growing frequency, difficult  
to remember. Once, I touched my hand  
to your back and smoke came away  
in my hand. I said, *forgive me*  
but you said, *no, it was the chimney,*  
*the poplars.* The nest of starlings  
coming loose by the side of the fence.

We were the cattle/ not knowing what it was to want such kindness

Yes yes now our hoofs are dangling  
crushed grasses thin bent  
beneath

move

here move slowly we are not practiced

\*\*

have you fed yes will you prod the  
grasses yes take care among  
the birds they tell false news yes  
take care among the rushes it is not quite  
certain what they do although yes  
they purport to do it daily

how bending unbending

\*\*

look, we can mimic their bending  
see, right hoof forward right hoof right  
then left  
then circle

\*\*

look, the circle of grass when we  
first came became first  
we came here look

white stones sunlight  
bright as the tint of  
a meniscus I remember

remember yes the water yes  
and the tenterhooks yes yes  
the noise that left the mouth as  
a scarf flicking around in a circle  
before escaping that also

\*\*

noise like a sleeve flicking around  
a doorknob but louder noise  
of something coming loose  
bones stitching tight crumpling  
before we had a chance to cry out  
and then herded here we are

\*\*

here remember the noises  
we made which ones  
we tried to talk to one another yes

I said, say something what anything just  
say something then what

noises sounded like  
water tumbling in a hollow  
log roundness  
holding no form water yes

crashing on a bed  
of water

remember how it was

\*\*

and the ones we used  
to make

trace a hoof around it what  
remember what  
once, I said I will break you I traced  
a finger across your mouth

my yes my mouth

\*\*

what was that thing called starling  
no no that other thing anvil

what about the ones we used to scoop into  
each others' mouths

spoon no, it was ours  
hands

## Elegy for Allowance

I made a shroud in the mouth.

Light, but heavier than what I could hope to keep.

As if I had stolen something, and, just as the shopkeeper  
had turned my way, had pushed it inside the mouth

and my punishment was to never be able to  
show it to anyone.

## Their Mouths Like Cut Jars Catching the Light

The shaft of light is making  
patterns on the glass surfaces,  
and we are given permission  
to move the glass man

and the glass woman, position  
them any way we'd like:  
change the way light shifts,  
over them, the way it bends

and breaks—there—bends and  
suddenly yields, and, for  
a moment, passes—through—  
enters the bodies completely,

if they can be called bodies,  
anymore—like looking onto  
a lake and seeing only a clean  
surface, as we seek to look,

and, in looking, can only  
transform what we see (grass,  
lake, two swans) into that which  
is flattened where it meets our

gaze, where no entry is forbidden,  
but no entry is guaranteed.



## Squinting, It Was Hard To Tell

When the first of the longings left,  
it came back months later, with only  
a tooth missing. She gave it food.  
It began to sing. It was only when they  
all began to go missing that she started  
to worry. She was not accustomed  
to worry. She felt that she was not  
very practiced, and in perfecting it  
she might often make mistakes.  
More so than the missing itself,  
it was the mistaking that worried her.  
Where were they, she wondered,  
now free of their cooings in the night.  
How were they doing, with plenty  
of strange bodies to feed them.

2)

## Visitation

You wanted to know why I  
called you a *body*.

*Soul*, you opened into flesh  
so forcefully—

the way a hand clenched into  
a fist too long  
thrusts open, numb.

## Marie Antoinette in a Display of Jellyfish

When I tell a lie, the jellyfish know.  
They look my way.  
They know everything about me.

Once, I danced with courtiers, holding my body  
close to its own center of gravity.

I remember the mirrors factually,  
how you could blow your breath on them  
and then make a picture.

This glass is bigger on the inside, expansive.

The others float through the case,  
pushed by some invisible current.

They have no need to navigate their own desire.

They are the traces by which it can be seen.

## Microphones, Bread, and Love

Let me speak candidly.

In brutality I found a beauty wholly other  
from that of a woman walking across  
a room to rearrange flowers.

You could say that it was itself  
the flower,  
a bloom in the corner of an eye

and for which I practiced my movements  
the way a songbird rehearses its

frenetic crests and troughs in its head  
all night long

before releasing them to air.

## Herself in a Landscape of Aster

Between the visible world and the  
invisible, there is a slit, sharp as a cut  
made by a thin-edged leaf drawn across  
the mouth. Or a knife wielded  
between the two bundles of the mind.

Here, white flowers open, endlessly,  
up to the point where the eye moves and  
presses and can go no further.

Can one pass through the slit  
and remain unchanged?

I move my hand. I try to make a motion  
that a passerby can detect.

## Elegy for the Body Erased

If the body is a site where  
all music stops mid-

, tell me who  
made these I

must look at and call  
beautiful. Years will

I push dirt  
thinking of his corpse,

thinking . Even  
something in emptiness that

resembles hunger. It must  
be possible to burrow

the earth and  
a clearing

## Alabaster Match

A thing that is invented has many lives.  
It can keep on replicating without you.

I set a scarab husk on some springs  
and watched it fly. I waited for  
the dust to settle beneath. And meanwhile  
the spectators were waiting, admiring  
the entire contraption of spectacle.

Everything I have ever wanted was caught  
in that space between willing a thing into being  
and willing it to go.

Some days a spun clock, some days a tightly-  
wound hand of cards. I had questions.

I pitched them to the stars in their infinite grid.

How do I prevent hunger from taking over  
my life? I asked and asked.

And they said, Can you light a ghost's hair on fire?  
What sort of match would you use?



3)

## Wasp Ode

### *Herself*

Look: wool makes sparks over the eyes  
if chafed

across skin at a certain

speed. In a flash, one can see

everything, before becoming again  
submerged.

Once, I built my looking-glass out of wire  
and weft.

I waited until obfuscation

distressed me, knowing as I did  
how to make it

mine. I could no longer place my own  
nature,

carried my losses like a dark  
red flower, as if a flower were

a tourniquet for the branch  
that made it,  
each petal bent back and layered  
like shale.

I carried two trees like torches, one within the torso,  
the other within the mind. And the roots of one

spread in the world as the other held me  
to the ground, kept me there....

I held onto people who were missing and to

things unmade by people

(A flower blooms. I cry.  
I walk to the store to buy bread in the mornings.)

*The Other*

Yes, she looked like me, the girl who called herself by what she was in relation to others.

She appeared sometimes in the corners of reflections,

in the plate of water I had left out in the flat for three days  
in the curve of the transistor radio I was given on my third birthday  
in the door that I passed through to get to my place of work.

I could see her flickering. I knew her.

The way she held her hands apart when she wanted to hide something, the manner in which she cried.

\*

In the Republic of Mercy, we had come to understand that objects change each others' properties in space:

that atoms tug and shift each other in space:

that the innate characteristics of each object are marked only by a complicated lattice of compulsion and repulsion:

that, in tandem, compulsion and repulsion form the shapes called human, bird, tumbler, xylophone.

\*

When she cried, I was compelled.

When she moved her hands, I was repulsed.

When I moved my hands too, she was always gone.

*Herself*

Sometimes, there was a screen, through which it was possible

to see all things:

the crests, the troughs, the strange

oases in which moss could would lick the body, rear to neck,

and there would be some rupture; a sound, perhaps,

a slab of light that slid through an opening and worked its way in,

hardened and whole, clarified—

so for a moment,

we'd be jolted, I and the other, looking in the back of the glass

to find what could be seen out of the corners of the eye,

a shadow through a cataract:

we saw the world first through a slit

then we were the aberration

*The Other*

We had, following other discoveries,

synced up particular voices to particular physiognomies:

particular gestures to particular emotions:

everything equalized as to marginalize room for harm.

Harm had its own rooms, in the Grand Mausoleums  
beneath the city epicenter.

Proscribed visiting hours for the curious were 9 to noon.

An ex-boyfriend claimed to have stolen a steel cat  
from the corridors, tied it up with wire,

and had it re-programmed to recite Keats in a staccato voice  
when he had intelligentsia over.

Another friend said she met her fiancé there.

Probably neither of them had ever even seen  
the inside of that place.

*Herself*

I'd stretched a sheet out over the screen, like a curtain  
in a morgue. Every once in a while trees made shadow puppetry  
through it, slim with their slim shapes which I could not grapple or feud,  
feeding them as I did to the ambient dark and things  
that lurked in it, like feeding scraps to a scrappy dog you want  
to grow larger, whose teeth come to scrape across the sinew  
of the heart and calves in gratitude, in composure. When one thing  
came, there was always another, a series of bright lights answering  
each others' calls, watchtowers on a phantom fissure. This was my life.  
And sometimes a thing would go missing.

*The Other*

In year twenty of the Republic of Mercy there came to be built  
a glass-bottomed boat that could fit half the people

of the nation, exactly half. In it you could  
travel, go places, see fish in their many-finned splendor.

Above: a large wood dome. Flat, dark,  
the bodies fitted into each space like coins in a slot.

I took the boat for many rotations, travelled in my sleep,  
marveled at the ingenuity of the burrs that turned,

always propelling the thing forward, not leaving us to rest.

Below: the infinite world,

all its ligaments, all its creatures.

*Herself*

And each time a thing went missing there was  
an aftermark, a singe that could be sensed only if  
I happened to brush right up against the edge of it,  
like a dog against a leg, or an elephant scurrying around  
a dime. If I pushed into the center of it  
there was only a whiff of a memory, marking what  
I should have know, as a pear shaped mark on wood  
comes to stand in for pear or something that just looked  
like it, something much larger—



*The Other*

When a signal sent collided with a signal from the receiver,  
the peaks and valleys could easily skew,  
and all of the frequencies occurred at all the wrong times.

Therefore I had trouble understanding her, the girl from beyond.

But I always knew  
the tap of the rhythm, learned it in my sleep, could reproduce  
it without really understanding. Tap *tap* tap. Tap tap *tap tap*.

A message like a mistake you make so many times  
it becomes ritual rather than accident,

or something you appropriate into a private lexicon,  
say, the eye of an iris, so bright and large

it comes to represent sorrow, or drowning.  
A marble placed in the mouth.

When you look away it is once again *iris*.

Like that, but over and over.

*The Other*

Like something misplaced followed by the tap that responds to the silence carved out by it.

You know how sometimes a person you love walks off the balcony one day, and the next day you can just go on living your life?

Then months later you're reading something completely random but it has the word "pressure-hook" in it, and you start crying nonsensically.

Or you write a letter to your mother and it's lost in the currents of a solar-storm. Then the repair agencies go: "soon, communications will resume, soon..." And *soon* comes to stand in for the thing you meant to tell her.

*Herself*

Because I had, in order to make sense out of nonsense,  
begun to make a compendium: what to maim, who to trust.

Because violence was necessary to seeing  
something truly, as when a parent tosses a lamp across a room  
in anger, and for a moment before breaking, it makes the other objects  
in the room careen across the walls.

I wanted to understand the properties of how things broke:  
what it looked like, what it meant. If in fact, it wasn't possible to build  
the world anew. What atoms, what ligaments we would then  
be building from. Love as not a phantom hand reaching over  
a phantom hand, but rather, something in the world;  
not an object but a directionality for other forces of motion.

*The Other*

When I was a little kid, my mother made me an anagram game to keep me occupied when no one was around.

You can do it with anything, she said.  
Try starting with *wode-sparrow*.

She might have said wood-sparrow,  
I think I heard it wrong.

When I was lonely I would start repeating it to myself,  
permutating it. And only later did I realize that  
the choices were fairly limited:

*wode-sparrow, wasp-ode, sorrow-ape.*

Yes, it became a staving off of enclosure,  
an ordering of nonsense,

a rasping noise that lingered everywhere in the world

*Herself*

Once, I made my looking-glass  
out of wire and weft.

I carried my losses like a dark red flower,  
as if a flower were  
                                  a tourniquet  
for the thing that made it, each petal layered  
  
                          and bent back like shale...

Outside the trees clicked

as wind moved through the flat wood-  
tokens that people had hung in them,

as if they could ward out harm or  
keep in what

could harm within reason.

(I stretch out a hand to the screen, touch  
the other one—

                  try to cross—)

4)

## Spring Rituals

To walk to the river, I must first pass through panes of glass. There is a propped ladder I use to get out of the window at night, although sometimes I switch the window up. So as to not repeat the same escape too often.

After many hours, there is no significant change in the water.

\*

A woman I admire gives me a stone. I can't parse the meaning of this.

I like the feeling of hoisting a bag of stones up—how the contents shift, and, for a moment, there seems to be a choice between lifting the bag and keeping myself steady.

\*

At the museum, I find an anchor used in the last great conquests of the Dutch empire. I know almost nothing of the Dutch, other than their obsessive cultivation of the tulip.

There are three clumps of tulips on the desk in my room, two of them wilted and splayed in all directions. The third isn't there yet.

\*

Every morning when I wake up, I stare at my flowers first.

I decide this isn't about sinking or drowning. At night, so many of the girls I know go to the river and peel their clothes off, launch in—and all of them make it.

## Mea Culpa Elegy

I thought I could hone my mind until  
intellect and emotion were  
a single organ. The way a snake's motion  
comes from the musculature  
of its entire body, and when it moves  
there is no part of it that  
has not moved.



## An Exercise

Somewhere, a glass box dreams of another glass box,  
then another. It does that thing boxes do,

which is to pretend there is something inside other than  
a replica of itself, smaller and more mysterious.

In the glass box dream, all things become equal.  
This is the nature of the operation.

*Think of the best recent dream you've had. Then the worst.*

If you put them together, what happens?  
A bear clawing its way through a lemon-cake.

You see, aggregating things is nonsense. And yet.

## Come Close to It

We could be magnanimous if only we  
had the cards to hold up the house,  
says the woman dancing across the room  
with a strip of cloth in her teeth and a bucket  
in her hands. She says, The glass box  
and the alabaster match are lonely too.  
Behind her: a plaster moon, so huge and  
perfect I can't even approach it.  
There is no order to things that need  
saving. She dances as the room  
lurches into spring. The red mouth of a dog  
opens in delight next to the white rind  
of the world, which falls away at  
the cut, symmetrically.

## Elegy for the Refusal

Even now, I do not know how  
to go through with this procedure.  
I'd rather let the entire stem  
of the body atrophy than cut off  
a single hand. Here, in the room,  
I lick the threads so that the two bits fuse,  
then blow them clean. Sun makes a halo  
behind the hand-held mirror. The mirror  
is cold on the side I face, plate of flame  
on the other. My face is clear.

How do I let go, if I'm not willing  
to leave anything behind?

## Red Velvet Confessional

I sleep far too often. When I wake it is  
too bright, then too dark,

then too bright again. Soft and easy to stroke:  
the bed, offering no resistance. I dream.

Steel, starling, aster: things  
having nothing to do with me

hurt me. Spruce, positioning  
its points toward sky. The sound

of the word “spruce,” like the sensation of  
a knife sliding through two sheaves

of agar. Just soft enough of an incision  
that I can imagine it going through

something that has less  
give—

I wake with my head in a snake’s  
mouth. Then someone comes  
with a silver hammer to take off its head.

\*

All my life I have wanted to feel that I  
am worth something. The way a sheep  
has worth, sheared for the winter  
warming, its white flame of wool coaxed  
into something of use.

Each helper with a hoof in one hand  
holding tight the white thing as  
it squirms, tries to kick free into  
the stark landscape, blind need  
tumbling forth with the urgency  
of animal resistance.

\*

I hold my head under a faucet.

I touch my neck.

There is no better way to understand  
the mechanism

of a body than to see how it functions  
under adverse circumstances.

Like listening to the falter of  
a clockwork whose toothed  
gears bite into all the wrong parts.

The saw-toothed grind of it goes and goes.

In the river, the fish all go one way  
in the soft silt, their bodies  
becoming obscured yet traceable.

\*

So often I have wanted to place  
myself in danger,

past the point of possible salvation,  
as if it would make my frantic

mind reasonable. I dream  
I am a martyr. I walk back and forth

in the kitchen all day, filling my  
body with rice and spices for the kill.

I circle the same space over and over,  
with an urgency that seems to

come from nothing, silk scarf  
from a red sleeve of failure—

and I, falling

in an open field am no more  
the field (which amplifies, in patterns  
of bent grass,

motions of the field mice that

pass through motions of the wind  
that passes through

and all the strangers'  
gesturing) I am no more that  
than the bullets are each

a widening pinhole of light

## Elegy Addressed

the antler blooms on the body took over the entire

—if, indeed, it could have been called  
the entire—

what left you first came back as a crash,  
pushing through the waves, not wanting to give you up  
I didn't want to give you up

in all the cymbals, there was only the great force

under great constraint, love comes, tumbling, through  
large crests of the filigree of

Or what came after then, folding  
and buckling as

the weeping cranes, with tips that sweep  
to the side among reeds

might find a place between sun  
and hydrangea bird and sea

## Notes

*Elegy for the Body Falling* references the Kazimir Malevich painting, “White Square on White,” 1918.

*White Borders* is an ekphrastic of the same painting.

*Elegy for the Body Erased* is an erasure of a poem that I myself wrote.