



NILS MICHALS

Chantepleure

Nothing's left. Summer. Nothing
but knotted ground, stiffened chaff, pulp mill's
sweet chemical, the inert valley.

Summer's none now. None of July's
tall drinks of water to lure to mooncalf,
to *que sera sera*.

Summer's windows, the lungs, gone the summer centerfolds
airbrushed in tour windows, her hair moving
in the air, in the window's tint, her air
in the lungs, the men spun, spun upon
silver spools of lust—
no July, no flags, no sparklers,
no city lightshow, no stripper
highlights, limousine rides, no flaghands
on water, greyhounds on ice, no yachts,
dusk yachts, glassbottomed on holiday in harbors,
no breeze, no nightflower
enacted on air, no sea window
and no lung, her air in the air no.

Masseuse. Chanteuse. Evening
news, houses white-lighted, eschewed,
tables touched by the taxman's
croon and flog, crook and hook.
Soon chantey, soon soup, soon cold, soon fog,

soon snow's program in lieu of,
soon noon snow, a handmaiden not to touch,
for who, whose knife for soup, whose touch, for what
fee, for what strange attractor is mimicry
when it returns not exactly oneself,
as a sound returned unnatural,
as in bird, call, bird,
as in call, girl, call,
as in foghorn, lighthouse to freighter to anything
in the distance that will have it,
as in given against, as in giving again,
as in what's left, as in all's a knife
to a knife-grinder, to whom,
to sharpen what, what knives.

Chantepleure

Light, crown to leaf to fig, light.

This is a morning, summer, this morning
an orchard, in my mouth, a chorus of orchard.

Stipula, ostiole, stipula,
syconium, vermilion, syconium.

Vermilion, I cannot hear, vermilion,
when you are near, the trees, you are near
the trees, remember, the trees
redden as one the hollow, the hollow.

Wasp, leaf to flower to leaf, the wasp.

Wasps, nest to bloom to nest, the insects
blitzed, their flight a knuckling,

the wasps gone blooey.

Your mouth, the orchard, your mouth
a summer color, a fig, your mouth a scarlet grove,
the fig, please, the fig in two—

Do not speak, anesthesia, you are speaking,
do you see, do you not,

the wasp, the fig is split, a wasp
within, a sting, the sight within
your mouth, your chest, see bloom your breast
a tiny mouth, a prick, see rise a fevered cave.

Please, the fig was ripe, please you were
speaking, a wasp, say something,

wasp, a word, wasp,

a slip, amnesia, let slip
anesthesia, the flower inside, anesthesia,
amnesia, anesthesia, amnesia.

The Unicorn

Should a flower appear in a field
where it never before as a crook
of sea-ice, arctic nearly
in a way something is probably, possibly, not likely
touchable. Should the meadow
bruise white and should the hyacinthine splinter,
petals dehisced, be as such:
gem, lightning, powdered throat.
Should *who* and *how* be one
then the lord shall be an animal
in the lowliest and the hounds twisting
through hours of bulrush blushed to scrub
are a love in themselves. Should the throat
upturn and give
itself, the coat's impossible
slickness, should by force of hounds
come unnecessary, should the world
should itself and shudder
wild eye to flurry to the mouth's
tender harp.
There will be air that splits the animal.
There will be delicate bleeding into a king's flag.
Should the light over time
not grow older, the ground the blood once touched
saltwhite and soundless as psalm.

Whoever says *how* and *who* are not one
will softly divide on horses
sprinting for the kingdom's corners.
Such is meant for us to yearn.
There was no flower and then there was.