

Christine Robbins

Wake

The wooden loft is open
And the birds
Take hours to fly.

What do I know of a hawk
And its hunger? Sound of roller pigeons,
Wings given over. I left

The door wide.
Un-write this – decomposition –
Some things I wish undone. I left

The door wide. I wished
For something's escape. And hunger

Keeps its watch. And the mind
Becomes a wake. Roller pigeon –
A plump affront. Nowhere to roll,
No sky and a fast heart stilled.

Sound of no wing. In a wake,
The I is on trial. The I,
A lie – a solitary mark,
A sham, a sin, a sign.

A rotting van
With my old things inside.
I've unwritten, I mean
A negation. Sing to me

Of the mouth and its want.
Sing of no song and how I slept
While the van rots. I left

Him over twenty years ago.
I left a child's seat.
A hundred deaths, I left.

I slept while you spilled the bees, my love
The ways I've learned to love are the ways
I've come to fail. Pressing at night,

You're moving the boxes
And the bees crawl into your sleeves
And sting a hundred times, while
A hundred times I sleep.

A hundred crawling deaths
Hot and bright
Trying to defend

The van rotted
In his drive. I lost
The child I hoped to call mine.

I buried my youngest's placenta
By a stream, by the sound,
By the sea. Un-write the word
Placenta –

Tissue that held him
To me. A simple way
To call the youngest three
Mine. We buried it

In mud. I spilled
The honey comb. I might
Have eaten the brood.

Have I set
Anything free in worrying
The knots?

Un-border the things I took –
Lip-stick, unasked for cigarette
Or four. A child I wanted for mine.
Unpocket

Thought as it presses, thought

As a sound, thought as a thickening
Weight, the falling leaves –

Placenta buried in mud –
A tandem organ, buried un-deep.

Hunger keeps its watch
And waits. Sound
Never belonged to me

But to my weight, shifting
As it received. And too, my four
Children.

A fast heart stilled. The rot
Of waiting, the pigeon
A plump

A widening door a door
Of birds a door of no
Sound.

Sing of no hive,
No hole to fill. Sing
Of no song. Sing and dream

Of nothing, of the nothing
That hauls us, the nothing that leaves us
Waiting at its mouth.

I'm now a wake – I've trailed –
I'm becoming simple. And I
Wake

Knowing coyotes and their claws,
Our tandem shallow mud,
Our sound, our no sound.

And what's been
Hauled into the night.

His quiet milky sleep.
His head so close
To mine.

Go down, Moses,
Go down to the bees. Lazarus,
Go out to the sun, go out
Rolling from the mud,

Away from the pacing coyotes
And their teeth. The gristle and what is left
To rot. I know

Women and birds turn to salt.
When we buried the placenta by the stream,

We waxed a candle onto driftwood
So the tide would haul the light out to the sound.

The trick is to leave
Before the fire dies. Leave

So the children believe nothing
Is undone. I'll go down

To the junkyard, to the van
And its rot. I'll go down
To the one failed love – the child
Growing and lost to me by how I left
After nights I couldn't leave.

I'll go down to my body, pressing.
Simple bloat and the hairline
Where it separates, where
The maggots come inside.

Decomposition
Is a teeming thing.
When we die, do we go out,

Or does everything else come in? Bees
And raiding hornets, the green bottle fly

And the hawk and sound
And the plump and love and fail and I

Still have some time. I am
Awake.

I wanted
Birds in the sun, rolling the time
And trembling.