

On The Wings of a Bee

As I peel bright red apples,
the morning sun alights
on my hand, revealing
a spray of age spots.

When did this honey flecks
stain my flawless skin?
What secrets do they hold
about the body, the soul?

Once I'd seen a galaxy
of amber stars on Mother's
hands, while she gently lifted
a bee stuck in a daub of jam.

I'd soar on the wings of a bee
over spikes of catnip,
fences and houses snugged
in the palms of green fields,

past pencil-sharp poplar trees
at the edge of the road,
to the graveyard, to a stone
darkened by seasons and rain.

At noon, there are no fingers,
no spotted hands
to lift and bring me back
to the fruit and knife in my lap.

Keep On Living

On their way to the graveyard,
old women clad in black pass
by my garden and greet me with
the well-known: *keep on living*.

Rusted words return to my lips,
foreign accents creep to the sounds
like tendrils of mist seizing the hills
at the rise of a cold morning.

The women lament the heat of the day,
the air full with the drill of cicadas,
the long road up to the top, where
the dead wait for their visits.

They talk of their family plots and wonder
who will visit their graves with a candle,
when their daughters and sons
are hired hands in the West.

They ask of my amphibian life, bird
flying each year to a house in much
need of repair. They like to know
if I'll break the cycle, if I'll stay.

No answers to offer, only good words
for a long, healthy life to enjoy.
I watch them walk slowly away
like black birds after a poor harvest.

Back to my work, I pull loose, rich soil
over the roots of my plants, chanting
to them, *keep on living, keep on living,*
you who will never migrate.