

VERSES

Khaty Xiong

after Yuan Goll

Like the lark I never found the way back to my native gardens

The wealth of sun shut out from all the rooms

Look at all these verses freed in sacrifice!

Beyond the shrineyard trees orphaning their flowers

Dreamweeds waging through the snow

Ever in memory a thistle in view

The Bloodhound rotting in mercy

IN THE FIFTH MONTH

Khaty Xiong

First snow in Dublin — my father following
a carp feeding on grass, a wet scaly canvas
scourging from the depths of my memory.

Lo, the last loquat I ever ate. So exotic
as I recall the fox that was struck while crossing
Stelzer Road — its head full and intact, the body
paper-thin and the crows coming to collect.

Out of respect I must be contagious —
a riddle in warning often in the appearance
of weather, like sirens perched on rocks
and one is made to be thirsty at the sight.

To look until there is neither face nor torso
left to save because the corpse has slowed
in this chilly air.

I am embarrassed. This daughter-worn
vessel I've become, letting these images roam
in my stead, seeking refuge in the white. Lonely
distractions. Like the golden-crowned kinglet
snagging its wings on a nearby branch
while gleaning for insects.

I lend out a finger and summon a little lake.
Restored from the walls of my mouth, I spit
at the cold, the tree, the memory of my father
unable to survive the cities. Imaginable fracture —
like bones adjusting in lesser form —
lesser than love.

The wind sweeps in mild forgiveness —
a snowshoe hare in accordance with the act.
Mistakenly along the tree line, my mother in plain view.
She signs for me home, to move on, to let out
terra firma, trapped from the heat in my palms —