

## *Walls Mating*

*(Todesangst)*

Under such a sun the dazzled northern mind reflects, on luck  
or love lasting till we strike together the closing rhyme

for breath, or some such cutting short of our tendrils  
of allegiance; on sex in August, or the lost comedies of Sophocles,

on the heat of a stone where butterflies give themselves up  
to slow applause. This morning I couldn't get an edge

on the rusty sickle, so left it long, the grass the wind  
was worrying into underwater hair. O lucky man

whose languour mid-afternoon so halts  
a relentless tidy mind, the blind lurch to cultivate.

I honour with incompetent smile the wild lawn, the sky  
vaguely rimmed by blue sea, the untrimmed

waving bliss of the day. It's not the place, surely,  
this little Walden a mile from the nearest of Norfolk's

anywheres, or the time, to be thinking about death?  
Wavering pairs of wings come to park their fragility by me

and I see tangerine with veins of chocolate shadow,  
wafers of peach under heavy net. Their touching flutters.

I watch tissues greeting, then the slow hyphenation of male  
to female, back to back. They don't know these days

as I know them, on this one of their twenty, lovely days.  
He was just the one to pick up her pheromones today

(signals that make irresistible sense of air),  
maybe a mile away, across the pale-bristled fields.

Now here they are, Wall-to-Wall, near the rosemary bush  
in the hot face of extinction. A second's delicate shudder

eases their wings, as if pleasure came by a conceit both airy  
and conjugal: a draught of perpetuation, it might be...

probably the breeze. Soon there will be, one at a time,  
almost invisible pearly seeds from her in the grass.

Suddenly these canny amateurs are away – she’s tugging him  
into the air, the dirigible one, still coherent but lightly

lumbering. They’re not weighed down by the baggage of our big ideas –  
so why are they already back to earth, apart, shaking?

*(Flying Blues; Carcanet)*