

Abecedarian for August

Gambier, Ohio

At the window, I see that summer makes bodies
become slow rivers of dandelion fluff and gravel dust, salt-slicked
concrete slabs pressing up against each other like
days. They stretch, panting like dogs on fire escapes,
each passing freight train shuddering the pavement. Even our shadows
flatten, crawling into the cold promise of gutters that exhale
garbage: cicada husks, barbed wires, sun-bleached bottle caps.
How long can a body hold this season? Maybe when it's over
I'll stop waving at buses on the street. Maybe I'll stay
just a kid mistaking headlights for Grandma's
kitchen lights melting into the Qiántáng River. *Come inside!* Her voice
laced with cicada static, moth-thin &
muffled, as if still leaking through her screen door
now, soft as a daydream, as the asphalt cooling under
overcast skies. Even when heat sags over the camphor trees. Even then.

*Please make it stop. Please
quantify how much time we've got left.
(Really? That's your way out?)
(Shush.)*

There, the sky splits with lightning, the thunder threatening to
ultrasound your unspeakable grief as the body staves off sleep,
viaducts overflowing all night long.

When it ends, send
X-rays of my body to the Qiántáng River. Let pigment lick from film.

You've left me. You've left me, love. And this
zeitgeist is shit.

