

i. end of may

like so many dancers these branches these limbs holding fruit palm open these trees stretch forth like bodies in worship contortions graceful stretching skyward pushing the muscle the tendon taut the pollen floats the bees watch in their box hesitate to leave the warmth of the box nest the warmth of a million hundred thousand warm bee bodies boxed through the winter snows unaccustomed to space for their bodies to fly wings beating air beating pollen another nest flying

together the trees the orchard are so many Chinese acrobats piling lithe limb upon limb not quite painless tell me trees, when the bees tickle on the inside of the round curve of the joint do you want to laugh do you want to lay down this heavenward stretch and feel loose?

ii. mid-september

a field of pregnant women these trees

the night before birthing lift themselves to the warm
rain let the wet run into that itchy spot just so

heavy on their swollen feet, they shift for comfort
skin muscles tissue bones pulled taut ready for release
stand close beside them and hear the pulse heavy with blood weighing the body
down

fertile banners on this hillside
blood red bright ripe
heavy with rain-soaked fruit

their full branches curtsy to the ground
in this last slow dance before labour before winter
before laying their burden down

iii. november (striptease)

like so many dancers these trees these Babylonian courtesans
 in sequined leaf gowns in tiny brass bells at ankle and wrist
 henna painted, all arms and sashaying legs splaying spilling out

at the end of summer these were mothers
 dripping with fruit
 holding it forth in their september hands
 fertility goddesses, grinning well-sexed

but it's autumn
 they've been stripped bare
 by a lecherous mountain wind, their pimp

before blowing, shameless,
 he draws a peep-show crowd,
 lookers-on who pant and moan
 before the carnival display

first the sequins, the straps, the red underthings fall
 and at the feet of each half-naked woman a pile
 a pool redyellowgreenblack forms

the wind flicks their chins and the women look up
 once so fine

they'll wear this expression all winter