

uproot

by the time I remembered you were leaving,

three months

had grown, disobedient,

all over the trellis of that fact:

vines heavy with fruit, flowers, bees.

rituals

for a week I've tried to write
this poem about you leaving.

one week

and 3 bottles of wine,

heavy and opaque with warmth, mercury
dissolving into blood. my chest
pared
like an apple.

well, you were right –
what the leaver feels
is different from the left. one a cleaver,
the other cleft. this poem

cannot guess any more
at you, nor your mystery,
that swarming honeycomb. do I still seep
into the corners of your mind?
here is all I know: me, staying.
this island and its highways.
those glowing estuaries

Golden Point Award 2017
English Poetry – Honourable Mention
The Collection *It is Still a Tree* by Gregory Ng Yong He

draining out into the maddening sea.

silent taxi rides; the house gate distorted

by a startle of light. nights

becoming conversations between myself

and jagged sleep.

thoughts of you pooling around my dreams,

then the slow sensation of nectar as it dries.

pine (version 3)

it surprises me
when, months later,
my thoughts brush up
against your shape.

autumn
has begun its cool wash
over the trees,
lush with the spoiled passions
of summer,

and I, still warm with the pain of you,
feel the fever weight of leaves
softly gathered in my arms.

remember how
you watched me crying
at your bed's edge,

and moved toward me,
deer-like.

I was thankful for being held.

what my body means now
is something missing your body;

there is so much
that needs to leave me.
pine needles nod gently
in the wind, refusing fall.

New Message

mid-sentence,

dumb fingers slip, and

my phone corrects

an imprecision into your name.

a dull reminder: that

while I pretend

you were no great loss,

the world and its objects

kept their count,

the numbers proving otherwise.

New Haven, February 2016

mid-winter, and my mind flickers
back to those months in Chicago.

fifteen years old,
a floor mattress
in my sister's apartment. first time
away from home;

my breath, still soaked
with humidity,
rubbing against the cold
and its vibrating newness. I cut
my fingernails
too deep,
and let freedom ache into me.

a different place, now, and I
have learned
to be more frugal with myself.
years pinched the strings
of my American fantasy
until their wild oscillations stood still.
but I have my own bed. a house quiet

and cool,

like a pantry,

while the city continues

around me. some days,

its mysteries startle into view.

headlights sweep the streets,

a woman laughs and sings

outside my window.

a moon sliver cusps the night

and slices a space for itself

in the sky.