

Wasps

it was August we noticed the wasps
crawling out of cupboards, sagging
in cutlery drawers, lying dead
on the counter. Wasps drowned in small
puddles on sinks and in bathtubs. September
we shook them out of coffee jars, when
we opened cans, they shambled, sluggish
as though drunk on the gin in our closets.

October each dressing was an exercise in caution, eyes
& ears tumbling from cardigans, turned out of pockets
sly bumbling stingers in threes and fours gathered
on light-shades, inched out of waste pipes.
The summer endured with each slow dying.
On our table tops yellow stripes losing
their power to shock – we barely glance at them now –
each crawl space, each window ledge
its own small place of reverence.

the summer is endless now, wasps limp along, dying, slowly
in fives and in sixes in every room. Out on our doorsteps they
are keeling over, like young girls in stations, under doorways,
up stair wells, & still the harvesting
is not over.

Janet Smith