

Elegy with Sumac and Praying Mantis

A week after you die, you return to me
a mantid on my kitchen window—

midnight, moss-tinged precant. I've been dusking for hours.
Ever since you left your body,

I can't stand bodies. The living.
Sometimes birds too, tiny hearts

ignited against the street where sumac blights
the garden, overgrown, needing to be destroyed.

I let its poison swell all summer. Now it filters
what might be corn-moon,

fixed-stars, what might be mercy. What might be
night-field— leaves tap the windowpane,

insect perch, where you quiet. I dirge to your spectral.
Where are you, other than in my kitchen,

watchful, patient, when I hear, what I hear:
you gotta kill it to the root, love.

Winter Birds

-with a line from Linda Gregg

Sometimes there is an abundance of geese
flocked together in the field by the busy road

barking clamor into bright cold air,
morphed feathers jostled against droplets

of mist, winter sunshine; a migration
southerly. Each December, I watch

the crows join in batches sculling the dusk sky.
I heard they congregate the city's elms

with all the lost ghosts, keeping warm,
signaling winter. The winter after my lover dies—

this winter— I look for the crow's meeting ground,
follow inky arrows at sundown,

can't find their roost. What are the trees
of the dead? But this poem is about geese

or winter or grief and I know that the field
by the busy road is slated to be razed.

Hard not to imagine the geese dispersed, searching
for marshland, mateless. I need them niveous,

cloud heavy, constellated, icy. Wings piercing black
of night, the sparking austral stars.