



Mark Pawlak

Natural Histories

Let us dig our furrow in the fields of the commonplace.---Jean Henri Fabre

Fly on windowsill
wringing its hands –
are fly worries
fly sized?

*

Windfall apples and overripe grapes
litter my patio;
drunken wasps
staggering amid the bounty.

*

Neighborhood Tabby
seated on haunches, forepaw extended,
sparring with white butterfly:
Felis catus vs. Pieris rapae.

*

As Jack his beanstalk,
the snail, this sunflower.

The fighter pilot, his carrier deck;
the dragonfly, this grass blade.

*

Frenzied swarm of starlings
flying hither, thither; thither, hither;
neither mindful of where they are headed
nor what they are looking for.

*

The neighbor's busy cat
enters, exits; re-enters, re-exists,
all afternoon by way of the screen door
left open a crack.

*

Tiny brown ant
climbs up my bare calf;
not finding what it was seeking,
retraces its path.

*

Breathless afternoon:
bees nectaring, wasps burrowing,
white butterfly waltzing
among blue and purple hydrangeas.

*

Impatient ants,
intoxicated by the fragrance
of peony buds not yet opened,
trying to pry apart the petals.

*

Cobwebs cover
my backyard grill.
Webs empty, grill cold,
spiders and me both hungry.

*

Rain all afternoon;
now, this cloudless night:
cat lapping stars in backyard puddle,
sparrows bathing on trash can lid.

*

Lacking bridesmaids,
the garden slug
drags her own silk train
down this moonlit path

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Full summer moon
resting atop the high wooden fence
that separates neighbor from neighbor,
Thee from Me; Me from Thee.

*

Starless night,
dinner guest departed,
lighted lantern on patio table,
moths to keep me company.

Mark Pawlak is the author of seven poetry collections and the editor of six anthologies. His latest books are *Go to the Pine: Quoddy Journals 2005-2010* (Plein Air Editions/Bootstrap Press, 2012) and *Jefferson's New Image Salon: Mashups and Matchups* (Cervena Barva Press, 2010). His work has been translated into German, Polish, and Spanish, and has appeared widely in English in anthologies such as *The Best American Poetry*, *Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust*, *For the Time Being: The Bootstrap Anthology of Poetic Journals* and in the literary magazines *New American Writing*, *Mother Jones*, *Poetry South*, *The Saint Ann's Review*, and *The World*, among many others. For more than 30 years Pawlak has been an editor of the Brooklyn-based *Hanging Loose*, one of the oldest independent literary journals and presses in the country. He supports his poetry habit by teaching mathematics at UMass Boston, where he is Director of Academic Support Programs. He lives in Cambridge.