I was talking to a moth
the other evening
he was trying to break into
an electric light bulb
and fry himself on the wires

why do you fellows
pull this stunt i asked him
because it is the conventional
thing for moths or why
if that had been an uncovered
candle instead of an electric
light bulb you would
now be a small unsightly cinder
have you no sense

plenty of it he answered
but at times we get tired
of using it
we get bored with the routine
and crave beauty
and excitement
fire is beautiful
and we know that if we get
too close it will kill us
but what does that matter
it is better to be happy
for a moment
and be burned up with beauty
than to live a long time
and be bored all the while
so we wad all our life up
into one little roll
and then we shoot the roll
that is what life is for
it is better to be a part of beauty
for one instant and then cease to
exist than to exist forever
and never be a part of beauty
our attitude toward life
is come easy go easy
we are like human beings
used to be before they became
too civilized to enjoy themselves

and before i could argue him
out of his philosophy
he went and immolated himself
on a patent cigar lighter
i do not agree with him
myself i would rather have
half the happiness and twice
the longevity

but at the same time i wish
there was something i wanted
as badly as he wanted to fry himself

-- Don Marquis

Isled in the midnight air,
Musked with the dark's faint bloom,
Out into glooming and secret haunts
The flame cries,
'Come!'

Lovely in dye and fan,
Atremble in shimmering grace,
A moth from her winter swoon
Uplifts her face:

Stares from her glam'rous eyes;
Wafts her on plumes like mist;
In ecstasy swirls and sways
To her strange tryst.

-- Walter de le Mare
“LUNA MOTH”

No eye that sees could fail to remark you:
like any leaf the rain leaves fixed to and
flat against the barn’s gray shingle. But

what leaf, this time of year, is so pale,
the pale of leaves when they’ve lost just
enough green to become the green that means

loss and more loss, approaching? Give up
the flesh enough times, and whatever is lost
gets forgotten: that was the thought that I

woke to, those words in my head. I rose,
I did not dress, I left no particular body
sleeping and, stepping into the hour, I saw

you, strange sign, at once transparent and
impossible to entirely see through. and how

still: the still of being unmoved, and then

the still of no longer being able to be
moved. If I think of a heart, his, as I’ve

found it.... If I think of, increasingly, my

own.... If I look at you now, as from above,
and see the diva when she is caught in mid-

triumph, arms half-raised, the body as if

set at last free of the green sheath that has—
how many nights?—held her, it is not

without remembering another I once saw:

like you, except that something, a bird, some
wild and necessary hunger, had gotten to it;
and like the diva, but now broken, splayed

and torn, the green torn piecemeal from her.
I remember the hands, and—how small they
seemed, bringing the small ripped thing to me.

-- Carl Philips

“UNNAMED”

There’s a kind of white moth, I don’t know
what kind, that glimmers
by mid-May
in the forest, just
as the pink mocassin flowers
are rising.

If you notice anything,
it leads you to notice
more
and more.

And anyway
I was so full of energy.
I was always running around, looking
at this and that.

If I stopped
the pain
was unbearable.

If I stopped and thought, maybe
the world
can’t be saved,
the pain
was unbearable.

Finally, I noticed enough. All around me in the forest
the white moths floated.

How long do they live, fluttering
in and out of the shadows?

You aren’t much, I said one day to my reflection
in a green pond, and grinned.

The wings of the moths catch the sunlight
and burn
so brightly.

At night, sometimes, they slip between the pink lobes
of the mocassin flowers and lie there until da
motionless
in those dark halls of honey.

-- Mary Oliver