

Laura Forwood

[If you ask the worm]

If you ask the worm,
The next world is an eternity in soft dark soil
Fields and fields of fresh decay.

The midge and horsefly would tell you about a world built
from warm bodies, sharp mandibles, and flowing blood,
born already smelling copper, from this sunrise, or the next.

If you ask the moth, with its frilled body and already shredded wings
Heaven is a single moment of bright light, and then the elation of burning
On a cigar lighter, or electric bulb.

If you ask the caterpillar, down in the allotment, with a voice like a windchime
Heaven will be a kaleidoscope sky, petals in every direction.
wings sheathed, ready, on the underside of leaves.
Waiting for the drowned, crushed, and eaten to climb
up to pluck them and stitch them to their backs.

And I won't ask God, he says, why I had to be unmade in every way that matters.
when he had them there waiting all along.
I will just be beautiful, and beautiful, and beautiful.
He sighs and weaves his cocoon closer.
A scab, or a husk, or a coffin