

*Paula Rankin*

## Separation

Running up the back hill in the dark,  
 I hear splats of fat rain or spoiled  
 peaches, dropping. But it's cow,  
 shitting; I slow to skirt the pile  
 I can't see—no moon, no seepage  
 of houselights.  
 First night without you,  
 I'm reminded how much  
 has nothing to do with love,  
 comes down to broken fencing,  
 all the parts of the world dressed  
 for a funeral. The starless night  
 you sped toward collision  
 with what could not be told  
 from the darkness it stepped out of:  
 was it Destiny  
 or Angus crushed, splattered through car,  
 through all hope of steering?  
 One by one, farmers came out of the woods  
 disclaiming, *not mine, not mine.*

If I didn't know better  
 I'd say the fireflies knew  
 something, pulsing phosphorescent weddings  
 up our sleeves, through dusk's leaves,  
 their children so soon upon them  
 and even sooner gone,  
 air their backdrop. If only I believed  
*carpe noctem!* meant the night  
 was seizable, or that whether we touch  
 or die is a matter  
 stars decide from cold,  
 unimaginable perspectives. Then  
 what promises I'd make  
 not to keep, what shocks of recognition  
 I'd deny, what children you and I would have  
 not to raise, not to love, not to weep.