

**BECKIAN FRITZ  
GOLDBERG**

Petaloudes

On the island of Rhodes  
we walked into a valley of butterflies.  
The trunks of the trees  
were ruffled with dark yellow wings.  
The branches rippled with them.  
The rocks bloomed with them.  
It was the smell of the oriental  
sweetgums, of aromatic resin, that called  
the Tiger Moths floating  
from light to shadow, delicate  
mortals, landing on heaven  
which grew here. The air  
buzzed electric with cicadas  
as if the heat were singing.  
Summer is beautiful, the one  
memory loves most. Thousands  
like gold leaves refusing  
to fall, fluttering under the breeze,  
folded to sleep upright  
on the trunks. Later that day  
we looked down from a cliff  
at the edge of the island  
into the blue blown  
glass of the sea. The view  
has been the same  
for centuries—water, sky,  
hardly a horizon—  
Standing there was like falling.

Standing there was already  
long ago. We rode back  
to town in the bed of someone's truck  
with only one wheel centered  
in the front as it bumped and  
wheezed along the road. On  
the way down, the smell of pine pitch  
from the aleppos hung in the heat  
and sometimes we breathed in  
the sweet stink of gasoline until  
we arrived and the air again  
was full of the sea. Summer  
in no year. Summer of no sleep.  
We lay nights in that room barely  
bigger than the bed  
beneath the one small window,  
naked, too hot for the sheet, listening  
to the town cats cry on the roof  
above us. All night they were  
agonies. All night they were desire.  
Goddam them. The Tiger Moths, too,  
were nocturnal, swooning in the perfumed  
trees to mate before the end of  
the season. They had starved themselves  
for this moment. Summer  
of sweat and honey  
fed to us a century later by  
mysterious means. Summer of  
flying flowers. At night the water  
was black, the sky was black. Both  
had a moon—  
You could hardly  
tell where the world was—  
Your body, my body,  
the valley trembling, and beauty  
the birth of grief.

**Beckian Fritz Goldberg** is the author of several volumes of poetry, including *Body Betrayer*, *In the Badlands of Desire*, *Never Be the Horse*, *The Book of Accident*, and *Lie Awake Lake*. Her poetry has appeared in *Harper's*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Best American Poetry 1995*, and *Field*. She has been awarded the Theodore Roethke Poetry Prize and a Pushcart Prize. She teaches at Arizona State University.

**ALLEN FORREST**

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