

Letter to the Gone Lover, Late May

If I needed to make a list for you
of all the beautiful things that have gone
on since you've left, the first thing

would be the line of bats leaving
the bridge at sunset, hundreds,
flying into the sky until they disappeared,

the effect making the mountains
to the west look more like a scrawled
suggestion of words than a skyline.

Or maybe what was beautiful
was that I could see something beautiful
that didn't also make me sad, something

in the constant motion of so many wings,
the bat a thing that shouldn't fly
but does, so unlike the easy lightness

of birds—something so beautiful in that
effort, the struggle of a bat against
the weight of its very bones.

And this night was made more lovely
because I was finally riding
in someone else's pickup truck,

that I could even, and that this man—
not my lover yet but the air charged
with it—that this man and I caught

the sight driving over the bridge
and had to pull into the parking lot
at the Brake Max to catch the last ones

go, that we ran to the wash and stood
as close as we could, that we leaned in
to see even further, the line

of the bats breaking into fragments or
just individual letters, those paper wings
slashing and cutting the air in pursuit

of the insects, a world altogether visible
and invisible. Or maybe it was the standing

with this man, that we had both lived in the desert

so long and never seen this, and remarked so,
and that finally, we were as quiet
as they were, all the sounds of a city

and animals momentarily absent,
so that there was an observed ending—
they were gone to us—so that

we had to turn and walk through
the sand, the dried-up grasses, back
to the truck, and go.

I know now there is
a beautiful thing in leaving, one you must
have known. Whatever desire that drew

those bats to the sky will stir in them again
tomorrow, and the next tomorrow.
I don't need to write you a list

of beautiful things, but I have begun it
so I can only finish it—then, suddenly,
it's through.