

# MOTH POETRY

## “THE LESSON OF THE MOTH”

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

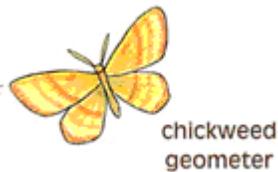
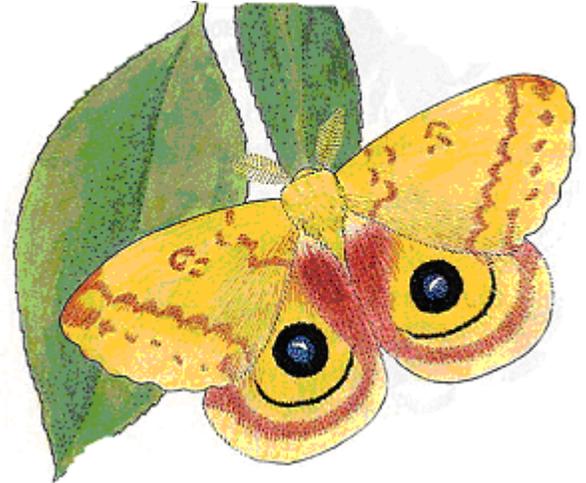
why do you fellows  
pull this stunt i asked him  
because it is the conventional  
thing for moths or why  
if that had been an uncovered  
candle instead of an electric  
light bulb you would  
now be a small unsightly cinder  
have you no sense

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



## “THE MOTH”

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



giant leopard moth

*“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.

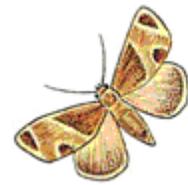
How long do they live, fluttering  
in and out of the shadows?

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 moccasin flowers and lie there until da  
motionless  
in those dark halls of honey.

-- Mary Oliver



slug moth

