The Moth at Knossos

The sun was bright and warm and the moth rose ballasted to the surface of the sky higher than he had gone before, and his hirsute wings, strong and thin were brilliant with the smile of the atmosphere.

The moth was with words, written on him, the solemn literature of his parentage or a letter delivered to his youth; perhaps black gnat-specks over the Icarian Sea or the singe of a candle’s attention.

There was another, unfaithful sun in the water below but the moth ignored its knotted brilliance and as he did it dulled and spread into a carpet yellow and oven-soft in the corner of his sight.

The sky was mottled with the taste of birds and smoke and as the moth rose towards the paper-white sun birds and other flying creatures swooped and shrilled dragging their swift exuberance across the sky. They rose together, the moth, the birds, and the other flying things above one another in tiny heat betrayals or riding the vortices and air-tails of their wings rose in a contactless embrace with the sphere of the earth so far below them all that they could see its self-serious frown.

A boiling blot dripped from the boy’s wing, and touched the moth, hardening into yellow umbellata, and burned away one ninth of his memory—the shiver of his carapace against a cotton scarf, and the milkweed dew on his antennae in the night—and blotted away the gnat-specks on his wing. He dropped, seeking the sun above, wishing it would make glorious summer of the cold, wet discontent.