

Barn Gothic

by William Wright

Red as a cardinal in winter, it leans ruined
in the gray field, form falling against a sycamore,
its older, wiser wife.

Closer in, a fox den
in the hay tunnel light where green eyes haunt
the nearby woods and stars cast silver

glyphs on the rotting floor:
Rain has felled the structure's roof.
Here horses pitched and leaned

into chaff, awaiting work,
this room still alive in smells of oil, dung,
and cedar-heart. Swallows twig

warped boards, black widows
float, wait
in corners to wrap and gore what passes.

Wasps caulk the loft's cracked seams,
and mice hide from owls, eyes,
their lives the barn's heart

beating behind the walls.

What to name it but beauty
this world craves, but will never allow,
not wholly,

the horsemint scent that finds
the barn's chinks. Moonflower
gripping, twining

the rusted scythe and the burled
yawn of the caved-in door. Or the beauty earth
sculpts of us without consent,

remnants hallowed, restored.
Autumns, when the air shucks
summer rain to hollow starriness,

the moon strikes the barn just right:
White moths hoard here where hanging
lanterns have long been snuffed,

where the only fires are the moths themselves,
their flock come to love this place and perhaps
the stars, too, all pure, radiant, dying.