

# *Heat Stressed Moth*

## Blaise Sales

Here, below,  
the black scroll of the microscope  
lies the shrimpishly-shrivelled corpse of a meal-moth,  
fixed by the pin-fine crucifix of a micrometre.  
The pointed, hairy edge of its foreleg pokes out  
of the caramelised glint of its thorax in an awkward,  
outward, bent-back postulation. In the grainy graphic  
of a JPG, its scaled-wings flicker like hot air.

But when I zoom in  
to its dark, compacted face, its palps are all but absent  
beside the tender coil of its defunct proboscis.  
The tear-drop splodge of its night-black eye reflects  
the artificial light of the microscope with the pathos-  
laden illusion of a soul, now exposed –  
as if under the vegetative stasis of heat-expired flesh  
flaps the white spot of a thing being thought.

Up the tunnel  
of the revolving nosepiece I wonder what kind  
of a nothing the dead moth's bump-lined eyes absorb.  
Are there degrees of nothing that can be plotted  
on a scale? Can nothing fan out and mutate  
into variations of itself, like the finical  
morphological divide between the 'Lunar-spotted Pinion'  
and the 'Lesser-spotted Pinion'?  
Or arriving at light with your eyes closed.

Then where to draw  
the line between a space so fine as existence  
and its opposite, when the dusty, detachable  
tips of a moth's body are tiny crested scales  
that help it to fly? How to chart the overlap  
between the erratic flight-lines of a mimetic insect  
and the zagged, stochastic lines of temperature-rise –  
which net-string is a repercussion of which?

Each ochre edge  
of the meal-moth has the unextraordinary off-  
ness of a burnt tuft of hair, or the strange tilt  
of an inverted pin. Its skewiff wings are curled,  
upturned, crackling out of air. Its single antenna  
juts alarmingly up in the slanted obliquity  
of neither a question nor a statement – its abdominal  
bundle bared to the openings of the eye-surgeon's tools.

If you look too  
long at the distance between the outermost  
and the innermost cross-lines in its wings,  
you miss the small hole of space that under-  
writes each moulting instar. The quick plasticity  
of the body's hinge is fiendishly complex  
and hard to measure, like so many small deaths.