singing about melon
Luke Thompson

Singing About Melon

Shearsman Books
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Acknowledgements
for sarah

SAMPLER
SAMPLER
SILENZIO
SILENZIO
SILENZIO

SAMPLER
Three Poems

*after Lafcadio Hearn’s ‘Insect Musicians’*

‘Let us go insect-hunting tonight,’ the poet said.
‘It will be dark and I have many lanterns ready.’

do not
leave the city

cicadas and crickets
in bamboo cages

eating melon rind
singing about melon
on a spring night
Kiriyama hears
still, small voices
risen from clay

a ghost-song in the jar
where our parents died
and at my funeral
the cage will open
but instead of insects
lizards and birds
singing
Sitting in the shade of lime trees on the piazza of Santa Chiara. Swifts scream in the olive grove.

A leaf falls
Rondini silenziosi
Rondoni rumoroso

SAMPLER
Mouth

words scatter
like birds
when I speak

the moon
rolls down
my tongue

salt on my lips
a ship’s hull
pressed to the sea

each word
dressed in feathers

each word
a waking bat

a waking bat
hanging from the roof
of my mouth

the wings of a parakeet
beat in my puffed cheeks

hollow
as a lobster
my mouth a bowl, full
of seahorses

the sea
pours through
my teeth

my tongue
a river
of eels

a sea of eels
lapping the shore

words slither
up the berm
of my lips

spider crabs
hammer
at my teeth

my teeth
a row
of uncarved slates

an ulcer
in my cheek
a moon

an egg
on my tongue
my tongue a bear
my teeth flames
in the circus

elephants wearing garters
and feathered skull caps circle
the sawdust floor of my mouth

a bear in a coloured ruff
and muzzle pedals a bicycle

I lace the kangaroo’s gloves
ty ing them with cherry stalks

my teeth a troupe
of polar bears
with scarred noses

my teeth a train of wagons
transporting lions,
tigers, bears and dogs

releasing exotic birds
on my breath

puffins nest
in the burrow
of my throat

on my tongue
an abandoned egg
my tongue
a murmuration of starlings
falling to roost

on my tongue
a forest of words

and within it a nightjar
churring

my breath
bare-beaked
rooks

each word
a hollow gall
drops from my lips