

MIGRATION

I want to write something about birds—Goldfinches
or Blue Jays, flight patterns, how a love of acorns
helped propagate oak trees after the Ice Age. Or, maybe,
how Blue Jays aren't really blue but brown, the blue—
a reflection of scattering light on the surface of
their feather barbs. And how no one knows why
some stay on the Atlantic coast, pierce snow
with their fierce blue, while others migrate south.

In chemistry, *migration* means *movement*, in physics,
diffusion—*pouring or spreading abroad*. When my mother
flew back to East New York, the architecture
of her childhood was gone, molecules of brick
& stone shaken & stirred, dispersed into air as if
they had never been at all. And her sister—stranded
on the seas of dementia, caught in a riptide of ghosts &
accusations, her lifeboat cobbled from the paste
& paper of imagination.

When I read about blood flow, how it helps
migrating cancer cells flee the bloodstream, seed
tumors elsewhere in the body, I imagine my cousin, a white
chocolate ring, dyed-yellow diamond—the favor
she made for her engagement party & I think of
the space telescope images, Carina Nebula's Cosmic
Cliffs, how every star born from its red gas-glow is dead.
And it's been years since my cousin didn't make it
to the altar, but I return again & again to the ring

& the chocolate, its sweetness, to the light that
will never reach us.

I wanted this to be about birds
or where we go to save ourselves, how I went from
smooth, undimpled breast to pinched skin & scar,
crude outline of myself, so fast I didn't even feel
the change in seasons. But I can't stop thinking about diffusion,
how on an MRI, tumors scatter—bright & sharp—
across the black calm. And if *to move* is *to change*
one's position, can I say that, in the end, my cousin's body
was not yellow & bloat but teeming with stars? That they multiplied
& multiplied, spread their light beyond the flesh & bone
galaxy of her. That every single one pulsed & burned with life.

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