

smog concerto

i'd be nothing
without blood dust
under my fingernail
without moon lust
under my skirt
without a fallen crow
in the street
a rat with his balancing act
on the telephone wire
in front of our house

i'd be fried ham on the sidewalk
burnt toast in the midday sun
i'd be jellied in a jar
without graffiti on my doorstep
the tamale man pushing his cart
ringing his bell
without a clear day
every so often
an interval in the smog concerto
sounding through this city and its troubles
this neighborhood and its lame
drunk and rambunctious

i'd be nothing without every cigarette
butt in the gutter
waiting for the street sweeper
and tickets on windshields to follow
without christmas lights on palm trees
unexpected packages mentioned
that won't get sent

nothing without three days
of unearthly quiet doing long division
in our living room
making my dramatic husband
a function of my anxiety

i'd be nothing without trying
to make the best of
something we never intended
something the smog won't blot out
something all the noise in l.a.
won't talk over, can't stifle

silence is the heaviest thing
we have to lift