

A Voice from the End of the World¹

The angels lopped off my limbs.
I'm left with a ghost-sense
as bars to my prison.

Terrestrial, I molt,
leaving my chain mail be-
hind—trail of a phantom limb.

Carnivorous, I swallow prey whole—
a lump inside the contractile machine,
squealing like a misplaced cog.

I slither on my belly in ripples
Like a line of garters
Rolling up a thigh.

Yet I have no limbs
Where I could once swing freely.
No hands, where I could once hold on.

I lie alone, cold as the ground,
earth-bound without embrace.
No more coupling as one.

¹ This poem is inspired by a midrash on six voices which travel from one end of the earth to the other and are never heard (*Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* 34): “There are six whose voice runs from one end of the world to the other and their voice is not heard: when a tree which bears fruit is felled...when the skin of the snake falls...when a woman is divorced from her husband...when a woman is with her husband for their first intercourse...when the child comes out of his mother’s womb....and when the soul leaves the body—the voice runs from one end of the world to the other, and the voice is not heard.”