

Skunk

Sometimes, announced by a percussion
of sparking moths tapping out the season,
then sizzling on the window screen,
you come intermittently on a breeze,
as a white stripe upon the dark.

Or through the car vents,
as pungent gas from a road-kill ghost,
a bad rose that starts off sweet,
the flowers and flowers much too much.
You surround us like the speakers' sound,
stereo for the nose.

Or parasitically, on the backs of dogs,
a fume of vinegar and musk untimely mixed,
some potent fuel, a furry smell,
a waddling smell that goes back and forth in the nostril
and down the throat.

Culvert-lurker, lawn-rooter, grub-lover —
what's your knack, never getting downwind of yourself?

—Brent MacLaine

