**On Merging** *after Ada Limon*

Catherine Ruffing Drotleff

After the emptying of rooms and shelves and walls,
the press of half-mast boxes crowding in,
the weight of all those books dog-eared, unread,
that white wall pocked with scrape and holes, what’s
left? Its like planting in reverse, and pulling
out the seedlings. You touch each thing you own,
bless it, pitch or save it, and yet there’s still quick
moments of stutter, fit-and-start: what if you dipped
it all amber, stayed fossilized on the wall?
Reader, I want to say, move. Don’t stay.
Even when packing turns you
into Sisyphus and his boulder,
and you don’t know where you’ll
meditate or who will cook dinner, isn’t there still
something holy about joining? The truth is: I don’t know.

But sometimes, I swear I feel it, the world starting to widen
like a fern unfurling its fronds, and in a home we found
together, I can move through different rooms and hallways
easily, find corners of quiet. There’s room for all my books.
I marvel at a quiet new urgency, a new intimacy,
at the gentle roar in my waking up, a panic-beat
of loss: of this space that is ours now, of him,
and that fate or chance, roaring like a pick-up truck down
a dirt road, could mow him over, leave me
behind. I am awake and alive in my desire.
I yank the sheets over us both, and
I want him to survive forever. Stay, I say,
and we decide to sleep in a little later, limbs
tangled and trees outside just starting to bloom,
unfolding tightly-wrapped wax into blossom and leaf.
Perhaps, we are always hurtling our bodies towards
inevitable absence, pleading with love
to stick around another year, and another, and when
we pack and unpack, move and stay put, we can do it together
now, and for as long as we can.