

Poems:

“Small Circles”

“Dog Bite”

“First Accompaniment”

“12.14”

Small Circles

The fog has shellacked
over the warmth felt this morning.
Mist turns to rain.
Along the vinyl canopies
a strip of raised drops form,
solid as brass-studs
on the seams of fancy
upholstered chairs.

I might sew
the torn seams of my coat.
I will not go swimming.
I may take a small nap,
and work on either
my life or my art.

When there is nothing else to do,
I lock the door to pace.
I recall Jesse,
the way he'd walk small circles
in the center of his studio,
head down,
glaring at the wood
as though it might
loosen the floorboards
and release some
slight sigh.

Dog Bite

Since getting a chunk of my hip bit
off by a mutt, something about
the displaced dog in society frightens me.

You should
get stranded
somewhere
desolate or barbarous.
Keep writing, as though moving
your hand across the page
might re-assemble you.
Look
how easy it is
to be skeptical
of human tragedy.

*

On my bicycle it seems okay that
whole buildings are missing
from the cityscape.
This is the effect
the blur of speed has on me.
Later while standing
in the line at the bank,
it occurs to me
landmarks don't
vanish overnight.

*

Perhaps the magic of you
is mostly in my mind,
but if so,
I find it strange
to need you vehemently.
Your absence has me
seeing the men around here as predatory:
when they laugh,
their incisors slash the air.
You say
in Africa
dogs run wild.
I don't know what puts me more on edge.

First Accompaniment

I love you more since learning
you play stand-up bass.
Your ability to steady such bulk
might determine how you'll steady me,
a loyal hand at my lower back,
four fingertips on my shoulder.
Afternoons,
I wear out Duke Ellington records
while waiting for you to awake
from your nap.

12.14

I made Christmas drawings
of pine trees spilling over
with ornaments, curtained and clasped
windows in the background so as to say,
This is a home.
I made such drawings, to be scotch-taped upon bedroom doors,
because I did not want certain traditions fading from our house.
How else would I remind my family
to be appalled by graphic language,
the violation and cutting open of bodies on TV?

*

Leading up to winter solstice, days grow
darker and more viscous. People seem tougher.
They stand on balconies and in the parking lots
smoking cigarettes silently. They come in from the rain,
clumping like seeds on oil as they gather around a small table.
They are too large a group and some sit
in chairs distanced one or two meters away from the countertop.
With their hands they touch each other's arms lightly,
anchored by the shape of grief.

*

We should be inside lit boxes
doing purposeful things with our families, or
bundled up together outdoors, looking up into
the heavens framed by the pines.
This night should be stored in our brains,
acting as a comparison point for others.