

Looking at you looking

Not the acrylic on canvas
but the man in a blazer
who gazes at the texture.

The crowd
that get up to gawk, not
the fighters in the scrap.

The photographer
photographed in the act
or the Vermeer painting
of a painter painting.

Not the kid with a mohawk,
jamming late on a Wednesday
without pedestrians,

but his only fan nodding,
smoking with long drags
under the same awning.

Passing the same couple

They exit as I enter, the opposite of an hour
earlier when I exited and noticed her shawl,
their arms interlocked at the elbows
and a poppy pinned to his peacoat.

We exchange the same seconds of searching --
elevator run ins? lunch hour overlaps? fellow
rush hour bus riders out of context?
But nothing registers.

I wonder whom I've taken them for. She looks
at me as one does passing another on the sidewalk,
while he looks back at me with suspicion.

What stood out

What stood out
wasn't the way he rode
on a bike too low
for his height, knees
cycling above his waist,
hogging the lane
and setting the pace
ahead of a bus,
thinking of switching left
and thinking against it,
unable to shoulder check
talking on his cell,
one handed handlebars
taking the turn right instead
without braking,
as the light went red.

What stood out
wasn't his windbreaker,
filling in with wind,
half zipped and showing
a heathered sweater
of his favourite team.

What stood out
was the ring of keys
looped from his jeans
that bounced,
bounced on his quad
and rattled and rang
as he pedaled.

Her scar

Her palm smooths the page of graph paper.
Lines, sharp, faint and gossamer like

her scar, a stretched zed zagged in the knuckle,
she watched scarlet her skin when it bled.

How close to violence had she come.
Alone on all fours having made it on her own,

an apartment, college, time for her art,
up late when not-so-exacto the blade strayed

over summer-tanned-hands that still like
to plant when not drafting repair plans

at work, when she talks about her sketches
she's drawn to trace the floss of skin with her finger.

Family business

Semi-stocked walls of spare parts,
printers, pressurized air, keyboards
and computers he refurbishes,
now, in their own shop

instead of a basement on his down time.
Waiting for the the mall's closing announcement
he moves his mouse in Solitaire,
in the other corner of the store

behind the counter cash, she watches
shoppers only ever down this hallway
for the dental clinic or exit and she worries
people notice their silence.