

JOHANNA MAGIN

Thin Places

If when we die we were to take
a look at the consistency of glass,
made to withstand the weathering
of light and touch, and consider
how once the glassmaker
made use of silica and potash,
volcanic obsidian and liquid steam,
how once even the Phoenicians
considered this thing of luxury
a viable vessel for the soul,
how vitreous might let on
to the quality of quartz
or the space between the lens
and retina of a human eye —
we would know that we too
are broken, made to last,
troubled, then untroubled, by the light
bent on coming through us,
made thin in places, once
molten, and then cooled
into the likeness of ourselves,
because diaphanous was once
a way of being in the world
before we had any idea of it.

Against Reason

where do you place the
tiny fingers

at night
or the fat swallows

that come to graze?
i need not tell them

that my mind is a closet
for death

and the house
an array of interruptions

i could not hold
the thought of you

anymore
any more

than the ripe peach
in the palm

of my hand
that once knew

the shape
of your soft head

Love Poem

He was speaking of the kill, not the writing.

There is such love for the tools and the process, once said a great poet.

He was speaking of the blood that looked like liqueur,
coming fast out of the chicken's gizzard.

There is beauty in sharp things, I can hear him saying.

There is beauty in the sharp mind that can look at death and not wince.

I know as much as he does.

And he knows as much as the one who slaughters.

I suppose that makes me complicit:

I suppose blood is an idea we have about the world
until we get our hands wet.

Fractal

I have to accept some of this will be scrapped.

The filament and fishing line were other ways of asking.

How do I tell the color red that you were once a force in the world, like it?

Unheimlich: If death had a pseudonym, it would surely be that.

I am puzzled by the phrase “staging our affinities.”

I once heard that a poem begins in the middle and ends in the middle, only later.

I have tried to explain something about the birth canal to my grieving friend.

There is something precious and terrible all at once.

There you are, I say to her, not yet to the other shoreline, but nearly.

Forgive me, then, for not telling the whole story.