

ADAM CLAY

To Dwell

A winter not meant for sweaters, but what is today

anyhow or no how and who are we to describe
the world worth dwelling in or dwelling without?

Someone calls into the night that the grass
must remain uncut, and that the kindness
of being alive somehow becomes grief

in the light of day.

At times it seems purposeful to pause
and admire each part of our lives

through the quiet lens of category. Of course
there might as well be a moment when words

will group us into a careful space of light and water
and we will manage to be glad
long before we have the capacity to know we are.

ADAM CLAY

Shouldered Agreement of Beginnings

As though we are not alone,
even our syntax would seem to suggest
an urging towards

an elsewhere, like being handed
our lives in a way best described
as accordingly. Alone,

the news sends a panic through the blood
though the silence could be much worse
if we would only allow a moment

or two of silence and its ability
to know us better than we are able to know
ourselves. Yesterday the mirror appeared

unrecognizable and today the mirror
refuses to appear: the joke goes that its
standard isn't a standard at all. Its existence

isn't a way of existing. During the day
even without the news on, the sun
alone can be enough to twitch the brain

towards a scenario that's only the worst
possible one, callous and brand new. Of course
there's a backyard fit for a drink or two

in the overcast afternoon that we've been
promised will open up into the bud
of a flower or the shouldered agreement

of beginning. A few hours later and we're
talking about what to do with the body
when the mind is gone, where to bury

or burn or salvage even a single part of it.
It's likely we'll be around for a while longer
but the ice melting in the glass suggests

something else altogether, though your
sense of togetherness changed and changes
like even a commitment to the birds

that land in the yard: to feed them is to accept
them; to disregard nature is to disregard
a small part of yourself, whether that thought

is a fleeting one or a thought old enough
for a thousand years of unrest. Enough.
It's warm along this season –

so much time outside and so much
shuffling of the feet and the body at night:
I wake up, don't know where I am,

realize where I am, still don't know where I am.
It was funny for a while – I dredged
up and wallowed in even the brief thought

of disorientation, but now I find myself
desiring something less obvious or more
passive. Someone once said we are the product

of our own thoughts, but what if those thoughts
diverge or dissolve because of the thoughts
of those around us? I like thinking we have some

sort of control over anything, especially when
the world resists definition as on a day like this one:
a streetlight in the backyard next door buzzes on,

the first mosquito of the year lands on my ankle
in time for me to kill it. To be proud of a beginning
is to coldly embrace an ending, though I'd prefer

to look elsewhere: a housefly. Empty fields which
will soon be filled with tobacco. A careless
highway and a future no one wishes to be hurled

toward. To be scattered is different from being
dismantled. Here, the sky reminds me of sap:
it seeps into every pore of our days, unseen

but unavoidable when touched. I'm too
certain of a situation and then the situation
becomes a blue that puts the sky to shame,

puts the best moments we've had to bed, though
the sleep they have is not like mine: a moment
is normal enough to cease being momentary.

ADAM CLAY

The End

Of the things we're distant to, the sun
isn't the first thing that comes to mind.

No matter, some matter. Light forgives
inaction with such ease

that we could learn a little something
by sitting still and staring into it.

In most faces I see a caesura without even trying.
I keep missing buttons to the point

of not bothering anymore. The news is better
off, and the way we view the end of the world
is too compact and simple, it turns out.

I'm glad
to compartmentalize in a sudden sort of way
because this world is a place where a truck backfires

and a bullet casing rolls around in the street
like a lopsided marble headed somewhere.