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## Poems

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We  
Live  
as  
We  
Dream

Baton tap  
on I beam,  
first lightly  
like vesper bells  
then heavy  
empty clamor  
that still fails  
to wake the man  
curled asleep  
around the base;  
impaled looking,  
clutching  
a rivet sleepily,  
like a lover  
who reaches  
for the other  
in the night,  
seeking to  
not quite disappear  
into them,  
holding on:  
dreaming of elsewhere  
and touching something real.  
Cop thrusts nightstick.  
The man gives blunt caress  
to the vibrating surface  
and says "Catfish",  
last word from another place  
and his eyelids lift like  
the yellow flags  
of a conquering country.  
"C' mon buddy,  
you gonna stay there all night?"  
hands fold together  
mouth opened  
pushed breath,  
first word,  
almost silent  
"No".

# Sibling

At 5:41 the time is announced  
and the woman sitting next to me sets her watch.  
And then moves it ahead five minutes  
the way I sometimes do to compensate for lateness.  
My hands hold themselves, folded in a church and steeple.  
Tugging at my thumb nail,  
I dismantle myself absently,  
and then more absently,  
torn fibers hanging sudden in the air.  
At home before the cold flat witness in the bathroom  
I send the hairs on my face to the blade  
for the crime of making me itch. Hair, skin, fall away,  
always come back looking like me;  
this rumpled sheet in the mirror,  
a fresh crow's foot lurking around the eyes.  
What might you have looked like  
stillborn brother before me,  
whom my mother never spoke of  
whom the doctor's could not explain?  
People tell me I take after our father,  
that I look like our brother,  
that I look like our sister,  
(but they never say our brother looks like our sister).  
Are you looking at me now while the tax collector's  
tiny eyes pierce my flesh? As I turn electric  
cards over with hollow digital clicks  
and thicken the day with phone calls  
dodging creditors with ox-tongued utterances?  
Would you accuse me if you could speak?  
Would I wince at a sound like my own voice  
shouting a litany of my failures?  
Were you robbed of a body? A place to be?  
An ancestry of salt and bronze?  
Are you watching me from the blinding formlessness  
hating me for the time I waste?  
Or were you guided, as I am, by hesitation?  
Did you see the faces in mirrors  
at the end of day pleading with light  
to be kind to a shape that only keeps  
light within, stores it for a certain time?  
Did you see before birth what I only begin to glimpse now,  
how we make of ourselves a thing rooted.  
And like a tree that is planted by the water  
how we wish we could be moved.

—John Mulrooney is Assistant Professor of English.