trailer dares

by Stephen Brockwell

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Reflections on a Moment of Solitude

Woke after an all-nighter.
Who hasn't? Night ends
when we lose consciousness
of it: at 2, 3, or 4
someone is going under
as another opens an eyelid
to deliver newspapers,
packages, patients. So–
woke. Silent street. Not a dog.
No tree breeze. Squirrels asleep.
Diffuse sunlight. Enough
to see the boundary between
the sidewalk and the grass,
to cast a shadow from an oak.
No cats. Silent dog. No kids.
The impression of my wife's body
on the mattress. No coffee. No bacon.No
queue of unread social media
notifications. Not one emotikon.
That leaf has different shades of green
on the top, where light reflects,
and underneath, where the oak
exchanges air. Yearning.
The world's exhausted.
I meant the word–the word
yearn is zonked. So many years
of it, widely dispersed. Never
have I been so happy to receive
a smart-phone's Mozart ring tone
ping, an alert bearing
a tweet with tragic news.

13 Ways of Talking about Nothing

1
No one spoke. I'm not sure anyone
inhaled or exhaled.

2
The power had gone out because of the
storm;
the wind subsided.

3
It was midnight. Clouds obscured the moon
and stars.

4
It was January; no cricket mating songs
echoed in the urban canyon.

5
No mosquito wings over my ear
radiated undecryptable signals.

6
No critters foraged through the frozen
compost.

7
I had witnessed the imperceptible,
ephemeral–
a breeze the follicles on your arm barely
register,

8
a transition between stillness and the
smallest
motion–until

9
Fred whoop-whoop-whooped, slammed the
rim
of the bottle to his lips, and swallowed,
his larynx the piston in a bilge pump.

10
Albert gagged as he vaped noxious
distillations
sweetly reeking of cardamom and tar.

11
Potato, I thought, reflecting on the absolute
darkness–not of the vacuum of space

12
replete with illumination in transit–
but of cavities in the earth where light

13
has no business, where a potato
grows an eye like a worm to see.

Trailer Dare

I put the chrome-plated hitch ball
in my mouth, an extravagant gesture,
not to fracture my teeth but to tether
my body to the metal in motion.
If you had offered me a wooden cart
with red-spoked wheels to sprawl in
on a long, steep incline, at the top
of Allen's Hill, say, I would have accepted it
gratefully. I'm not trying to peel
the skin from my body. I want to be
a body in motion without exertion,
arms drafting, feet dragging, hips
loose, fishtailing, my head
the fixed point of that irrational kinesis.