

In the End, Everything Gives

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What is above us?

The bleary algorithm of patterns, leaves,
towering history of law and lore?

Outside the gates, the chaotic hush of flesh
and bone, a kind of clamoring, cannon fire,
or a brass band, a choir of tree limbs asking:

What have we made? Who holds you?

Where resides our genius? Our courageousness of action,
name the glory, rename the glory, pin it down
in a book of legacies, ink, and stone.

There is a word that returns to me: Realm.

Someone on a train shrugs cartoonish,
“What gives?” And the answer: Everything.

Everything gives way, the shorelines, the house decaying
and becoming shrub and moss and haunt, the body
that gives and gives until it cannot give anymore.

When sleepless as a child, my mother would draw my face,
not with charcoal or oil paints, but with her fingers
simply circling my features. Here are your eyes.

Here are your eyebrows, your nose, your mouth, your chin,
and your whole face, round and round, this is you.

This was when I understood boundaries, that she could
see my shapes, and I was made of circles and she
was made of circles. All of us modest etchings

in the landscape, a fingernail dug into the side of a tree,
little winces, let me count the ways, let me count the days,
all the circles of us end eventually.

The light is its own story. When there is a hole in a roof,
what is the roof, the roof or the sky itself? Maybe that's
the real story, neither one belonging to each other.

There is a word that returns again: Realm.

I sat by a train window and traced my palm when I missed
my mother. I was giving myself a circle, this is your palm,
a circle which is also nature, a strangeness that is you.

What is grandeur? Who is keeping score?

I believe in the circle, in light that surprises me, when I can
believe nothing. The palm reaching out is a gesture,
a boundary, a circle one could slip through, or something
you could hold and in turn it could hold you back.