

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.