

From "Sleep Suite"

Wayne Miller

1.—[*Prelude*]

Light pressed to the tangle of birds
and branches and parked cars,

shop mannequins pinned
to the street—the street floating
like oil there in the glass—,

light striking the faces
of dogs and passersby, the leaves,

the radiator, the whitewashed sill—,
light ringing them into existence
as a bell struck in a quiet room

rings one's ears into existence—,
light that kept falling to ring

and ring the world
into world,—and all the while
a breeze passing through the light

untouched by it, asleep—

2.—[*History*]

And somewhere in that tangle,
a girl in a red hat sang along

to her earphones as it snowed
from the sky's lit ceiling.

Passing her, I recognized
the song, and when our paths

glanced and parted, I thought
in my loneliness, that perhaps

we were linked by the words
I now sang in my head.

I held us in this thought
until I forgot the next verse,

and then, all around me,
the buildings were sleeping

by standing—

6.—[*Love*]

Cars swung past the open window
as the world ticked
time in the rain

and the clock, and I suspect
in the neighbor's
pacemaker. Also,

your breathing, and the carlights
sliding the window
around on the wall.

The corner vendor arranged
his oranges
in the predawn

quiet—; then
even your sleeping
face was in motion—

like the fan
spinning its still,
translucent circle.

9.—[*Coda*]

I opened the drawer of the room

by turning out the lights. Earlier,
there'd been a train, a tented field,

and lots of drinks at the wedding—
All of which deflated like the light-

filled tent: just a parachute whose cargo
had landed. Outside, a streetlamp

pressed the shadow of a tree
to the window screen, the same shadow

on the bedside wall—
They rocked with the wind in tandem,

myself wedged between them
in that spare room I returned to

and then returned in the morning.