

What Metaphors

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The news swirls in black clouds overhead,
the skyline already green: what metaphors
for an actual virus, how connected
we are to each other, how the same air
circulates from person to person, house
to house, office to office, what metaphor
for actual fires, millions of square miles ablaze,
Ahmaud Arbery gunned down while jogging,
George Floyd suffocated in the streets, what
metaphors for job loss and health insurance loss
during a pandemic. What metaphors
for hospital beds at capacity and people
wearing face coverings at the supermarket,
this new normal, sealed smiles. What metaphors
for mass graves of the unclaimed, for suicide
attempts, for moving across the country, jobs lost
swiftly over a zoom call in living rooms, hollow
words from hollow throats, hollow as a zero.
What metaphors for divorce, for a generation
of parents weighing money or safety, safety
or money, risk or risk, sending babies to school
in masks. In the afternoon, my daughter's milk spills
and I can't find the tomato paste for the pasta
already drained. More milk spills. I am swirling
in the sky, about to touch down and I lower
her from her high chair; she pushes a football
on the floor and it rolls all lopsided.
The calming effect of this small gesture
like a bold ray of sunshine through twisting darkness;
I sit down where it landed and push it back.