

**John Gallaher**

## **As Everything Has Three Parts, & We Divide Them However We Want**

People are out walking.

They name the streets by the passing landmarks,  
though they always thought of it as planes on the horizon  
emerging from the trees.

On the north side of the street, I mistook them  
for something I remembered.

The swimming pools with your eyes closed. The trampoline.

It's how we pretend to be vulnerable, as a form of witness,  
the houses continuing to not end  
for some time.

They were a sign, like houses continuing,  
assembled in the light.

Because we want another story  
we can't tell anyone,  
on the north side of the street, where I mistook them for birds  
emerging from the trees.

Everything's a secret.

And the yard is pale, and the trees a hollow blankness,  
as if you could step into them,  
which is a version of belief  
surrounded by tall grass,

like standing there a long time,  
becoming a sort of practicality  
over which you can pretend to rise.

# Advice to Passengers

There is a man, there is a woman,  
and there is a child.

Their faces too plain,  
their mouths too wide.

It's a grim business.

They woke up  
and their hands were all rubber.

"How can you hold me?" they asked.  
"How can I feel you?"

"I kept meaning to cure myself  
or you," they say.

A man, a woman, and a child  
stand at a window  
a long time.

# Translation with Missing Original

The birds hesitated in the sky  
as infinite points  
to stretch in the light of the mountains.

The verisimilitude of these mountains.  
The people on these mountains.

The tiny people, the way the figures  
and the figures and ground  
were separately.

Because that's all you can say about it, finally.

Time all happened and then there was more,  
as they kept entering the trees  
and the trees kept falling apart.

All the trees are falling apart.

They're falling-apart trees,  
to vouch for the birds  
cornered in light.

One becomes aware of it.  
One sees it happening.

# Your New Birthday

You sink when you think about it. You sink  
when you think about  
other things, up again at night, the town slowing shifting  
back and forth.

The dolls are around the doll table  
having a pretend doll party.

It's four in the morning. They're in the window  
of the only room with the lights on  
in the house.

A figure in the dark around the garage,  
  
and the different things animals can do  
which make them look almost like people for a second,  
until you blink.

Which is make believe.

In the child museum it's 4 a.m.

You wake, and all the squirrels of the city are in a circle  
around your bed,  
watching you intently.

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**John Gallaher** is the author of *Gentlemen in Turbans*, *Ladies in Cauls*, and *The Little Book of Guesses*. Recent poems appear or are forthcoming in *New American Writing*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Crazyhorse*, and *Best American Poetry*. He lives in rural Missouri and co-edits *The Laurel Review*.

“My story of a front porch comes to mind very quickly. When I was about six, and living in Wichita, some family friends visited. When it came time for the inevitable pictures, they lined us kids on the step edge of our front porch. I was holding a baby in front of me. After the picture was taken I got up and started to walk into the house, completely forgetting about the baby. The baby tumbled down the steps. I thought I killed it. Front porches are always places of potential tragedy for me. More recently, I was showing my father around our house when he came to visit, and I leaned against a pillar at the edge of the front porch. It gave way, and I took a tumble into the hedge.”