

Nicole Bauberger

New forms of life

Walking up the road
I see it dance, the clear plastic bag.
It folds, pirouettes,
then straightens out its body,
comes to rest.

It performs its movements slow as sorrow.
If I were driving I wouldn't have noticed.
If a bag dances and nobody sees
what happens? What doesn't happen?
Well, I saw this.
Is the sorrow just an accident
of the bag's size, this particular wind?
What is dance anyway?
In my memory I still see it
as a kimono-sleeve lament.
It still speaks to me, wordlessly.

Forests fell then acid seas flooded them.
Sediment locked the sunlight in.
Millenia and heat pressed them into hydrocarbons.
We sucked them up, cracked them into ethylene,
linked ethylene molecules into strands
to weave this magical substance, so light and clean
the wind breathes it into life.
As it lives it grieves
all the death it's made of.
It's only the living who grieve.

I walk past this miracle
of thin ice, thin as silk.
I don't even clap.
But the beauty and the sorrow stay in my mind
in my guts in my lungs in my blood.
Maybe it's the microplastics in me
who watched the bag dance, who loved it.
Maybe they remember when they too
were large and whole enough
to move like that
with the wind.