

Beginning

In the beginning,
in the list of begats,
one begat
got forgot:
work begets work
(one poem
bears
the next.)
In other words,
once there was air,
a bird
could be got.
Not taken.
Not kept.
But conjured up.

(published in *The New Yorker*)

Future Perfect

Where you were
before you were born,
and where you are
when you're not anymore
might be very close.
Might be the same place,
though neither is
as slippery
as being here but
imagining where
you will have been –
that point
where things land,
are finished, over, and
gone but not yet.

(published in *The New Yorker*)

Probability

Most coincidences are not
miraculous, but way more
common than we think –
it's the shiver
of noticing being
central in a sequence
of events
that makes so much
seem wild and rare --
because what if it wasn't?
Astonishment's nothing
without your consent.

(published in *The New Yorker*)

Red Bird in Snow

You can choose
to stop short
or have it
not matter,
not weigh
the brightness,
not hold
very still
and be
known
to yourself
again.
A thing
fills
with exactly
the radiance
you accord it.

(published in *Third Coast*)

Belief

Light being
wavy and particulate
at once
is instructive --
why wouldn't
other things or states
present as
both/and?
For instance
I both
believe and can't.
Holding these
together produces
a wobble, I think
it's time
to take seriously
as a stance.

(published in *The Georgia Review*)

Proximities

A man walks into a coffee shop.
But it's not a joke.
I bought coffee there
last summer.
Small, with milk.
It's never a joke
to walk in or out of a shop
unharmed. It's easy
to forget
you aren't a person
being shot at.
I'm not.
I wasn't, though
I was there
last summer.
Not-shot-at
and I never knew it.
Did not once
think it.
Thinking it now

the moment thins,
it sheers
and I move back
to other coffee shops
where I never fell, or bled,
and then
I sit for a while
with my regular cup
and feel things collapse
or go on, I can't tell.

(published in *Antioch Review*; featured on *The Slowdown*, chosen by Tracy K. Smith)