

AUSTIN CHISHOLM

ANAMORPHOSIS

It was the kind of war that didn't seem to matter when it was over.
The children had gotten their early rides home, and we began getting drinks
Together again. That day was the worst of my life, as if getting strapped to a gurney
Never happened before we lived together. Our falling out was distasteful

But unique to that time and what everyone was going through,
What everyone wanted to say without the courage
To restrain their resentment. Had we not purchased a bird cage together?
We used to visit antique stores that made you sneeze,

Like chocolate milk or the space heater your father gave you.
Solipsism never handled a toilet brush the way you always had
Or danced in traffic. By the time the river delta had said what it did
One of us was already running out of the basement and bitten by the dog.

That was the era of pride and animosity, of show tunes and anamorphosis.
Slowly, the conversions had less to do with Arctic sea moss
Or bedroom manners. The gloaming of the entire street and elms turned away,
And the feelings began to involve practical instruments like dishware, screwdrivers,

And more. We read our books. We challenged the teeth, resigned to the sound,
Learned to breathe and eat in a particular way and reminisced
About alternate theories of the 20th century's standard toxins, inertias of progress,
Or chafing of the voice. It was your face that asked me if I was thirsty,

Your hands that resembled the others'. Only retrospect gives it the vindication
Of what was threatened. But undoubtedly, our art of hypervisibility
Eased the lightness of that photograph, as if the distortions of light
Weren't also a part of that reality. The lesson, however, has little value now.