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Two Poems by Daye Phillippo

Daye Phillippo

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DAYE PHILLIPPO

Commuter

On my way home after teaching a night class,
driving through lengths of fog like tulle

draped across the highway. Snow-covered farm fields,
highway as history carved into the landscape,

illusion of time traveling fast. Headlights
reflecting back, veil after veil, years

flashing back. I wondered what century I'd find
when I arrived at our farmhouse, my silver car

hurtling into the barnyard, stirring up chickens
and cows bedded down for the night.

A startled farmer and wife awakened by racket,
peering down from an upstairs bedroom window

expecting to see a fox at the henhouse, coyotes,
but instead seeing me emerge from my Camry,

dome light flickering on, thin music from the radio,
a woman wearing slacks, carrying a commuter cup.

Map

Outside, light snow curling the dirt road
like chalk dust as if wind
were erasure, a school of thought.
Inside, paint I began scraping, small curl,
back of the bathroom door, ugly peel
I'd planned to loosen, sand, retouch.
Small project become one-thing-after-another,
layers as irregular as treaties
with tribes, their cessations, wilderness
bisected by lines and lies, waterways.
Map of peeling paint, this door
—sepia, dover white, blue, pink, mint,
and underneath, shellac over pine—
1865 when the door opened to narrow steps
turning a sharp degree, wedged treads,
no rail up to the servant's small room
separated from the family bedrooms
by a closet, double-walled. Stairwell,
deep well of wondering *who*,
serviceable shoes, dusty perhaps
and run-over at the heels, faded cotton skirt,
gathered up in hand like years
and weariness, the steep climb of dream.