

Homeless

Cory Bailey

If you asked “What’s your name?” I wouldn’t look up
at the five fingers overhead,
nod hello, and go back to doing whatever
nothing I was calling something,
because no one asks the name of
the man in whose cup they throw their spare
change. If they asked for a smile or a symbol,
I’d hand them whatever I found in my coat:
a bus ticket, a receipt, the shadow of a
blackbird, a brochure on God.
Once he gave me a sandwich, some kid, he was
eating after school. I remember the relish
I didn’t like but ate anyway as
he watched the hole in my coat,
the stain on my pants, the ash in my eye,
the grease in my hair. And when he held out his palm,
I flipped him a coin in return only to have his
five fingers overhead.
Rattle. Pulse. Stop.
I wish I could drink the coin’s molten metal, copper in my throat,
thirst quenched and branded on my insides: Universe.
I remember a dog sat beside my
Plague-fire throne, and she
stayed a while. Four paws overhead.
It was June, so June she was, naïve pantomime,
attracting five more fingers overhead.
June became winter and June was no more.
The snow dusted me for hours
while silence sat in my arms doing

whatever nothing I called something.
If you call the sound of water—rain, tears,
flood, storm—silence.
But it didn't bother me because I'm a man
In love—in love with the rattle at the bottom of my cup.
In love with the rose fingers that flip a coin
my way. In love with rain and silence that blush my coat.
Amór I call my bench, my bed in the park,
Warmed by the June—sun.
Wife I call the loaf I buy each week,
hard with the wind, but soft inside without
disappointment. But don't think me a promiscuous man,
For my one true love is the stars.
My ballroom is the cup, my nothing the marble,
crystal moon the chandelier. Forged in gilded
loafers of age-old charity, season is my Elysian
partner. For as I lay on my lover in the park each
night, I look up at the stars and imagine in space
they must be homeless too.