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Cylindrical Bales

Catherine Staples

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Catherine Staples

Cylindrical Bales

With downed leaves and bared trunks, goes March.
Grapefruit rinds and teabags, soon enough a set
of onions, when the ground's ready and the rains thin
half-erasing the prints of the dark-legged fox,
the arc of his strides blazing through pasture.
Earth's steady curve around the sun: continuous
pull of the familiar—like a Ferris wheel in the dark

we feel it in our bones. Hundreds of revolutions—
tipping, inclining, trying—we must ride through
with birches and lichenized rocks, keeping our places.
Desperate for molt and new wood, the sway
of orchard steady with bees, each saucer
of stamen & pistol, a holy interior flecked with pollen.

But today is frozen: snow in islands, earth's slow
forgetting. Just a whistle of thaw beginning in creeks.
The sheep pile up and over the cylindrical bales,
their neat dark hooves balanced in muck and rut,
they're tearing away with sharp teeth
the summer days left in the sheaves—
the ache of your birthday coming round without you.