

## Working Men

On a beautiful Tuesday morning,  
sunny but not yet sweltering,

as Seattle summers have become,  
a man lays across the sidewalk

on 10th Avenue like a speed bump.  
His head is in a bush as if the branches

are neural pathways and his thoughts  
its almond-shaped leaves. He wears

no socks and different shoes on each foot.  
Some of his belongings lay beside him,

including a matching shoe and a blowtorch.  
His pants are too short, exposing ankles

tanned from life outdoors and ridden  
eczema flaking and splotching

like the crooks of my elbows and knees,  
on my hands and fingers and eyes and lips

and in that moment I feel kinship with this  
man, because my skin itches and scratches

and reddens and roughens, but I have  
come from a Polyclinic appointment

and will have a prescription ready  
after work and have work while

everyday for him is work to find  
what is gifted to me. I wish for eczema

cream to set beside him. I wonder how  
many miles his ankles have carried,

how weary he must have been to sleep  
on a mattress of concrete and through

clangs and shouts from cross-hatched  
cranes like looms spinning out luxury

apartments tall and thin, no more than  
skeletons at the end of the street like

supermodels at the beginning of a  
runway. They're built so their glassy

exteriors reflect the cartoonish sitcom  
optimism that is the blue and cotton ball

sky, not the unhoused man unconscious  
or dead in the construction walkway

with the makeshift joint clamped between  
his teeth pointing like an unsheathed sword

at the fine white powder on a crinkly  
rectangle of aluminum foil in his sooty hand.

Parts of the foil reflect the sunlight streaming  
into the walkway, a blinding white winking

iridescent. But the unshone folds of the foil  
look like a mirror looking at a mirror looking

on and so forth, a sort of anxiety, insanity,  
a sort of shiny, undefinable gray,

a space carved where there is no space,  
a place displaced though there is no place.