

William Pruitt

The Binding Dance

—for Pam

That day the stranger at the airport spoke about
his work, his family, the baby he lost,
his wife's lifelong grief at not seeing the body,
you say you felt your father talking to you,
and you ask me what would a person
 who didn't believe in a soul make of this?

Well, how about a spinning carousel, each of us
spinning too, the way planets move with the sun
in its great precession around something around
something around, a vastness we can express
and shape if we don't get dizzy from the turning.
 Maybe we're unspooling slowly as we spin,

maybe that's why things seem familiar but different.
Hey, if we're looking at this whole thing through
a mirror—the way it's been since we dropped the vision
quest and replaced self-knowledge with self-exile, a tic
picked up in adolescence, now a virus—our
 perception's bound to be buckled.

We think it's time that makes us grow, but maybe
the beat we keep is not the clock's. The instant
we notice our breathing's not controlled by time
but lives within it like a house, that instant
everything changes. It's then we see how time is a
 magician's trick that makes us blink

while our mind wrinkles. What if it's *now*
your father's there, and babies, briefly alive.
It's gravity and centrifugal force that make
it all *seem* old. You don't need a soul
if angels are allowed to interact through those
 filmy billion expanding contour lines,

if we refuse to let the social noise we make,
the great religions of Time and Self, cover up

what's happening in front of our eyes.
It's easier to think it's gone, but nothing's gone.
The footings your father sank for his foundation
turned instantly to legend when he died.

Meanwhile, meanwhile, meanwhile, meanwhile,
that expenditure of moments we call our life
is a ceaseless dance that binds it all together with
ropes of light like Wonder Woman, till we need a break.
If you ask, what happens to me when I die, back at you, Dear.
Who dies?

