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Onset of Winter

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ANNA LOWE

Onset of Winter

Red morning. Leaves plastered
to the sidewalk like the footprints

marking dance steps in beginner's
ballroom classes. How else

will young couples know when
to step together, when to turn,

step apart? The city is cold, strands
of Christmas lights meandering down

and across houses like creeping vines,
enormous hanging scars. Men

and women are still asleep, pressed
very close to one another, two

lashes under thick white sheets.
They come to the city to learn

to be quiet, to be swallowed up
by noises not of their own making.

Men wake to the awful sound
of other names on their lovers'

lips. Or they do not wake. Or
the sounds are not names at all,

but something else altogether.
Some other music completely.