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Poodle

by Ange Mlinko

idling in the puddle the gullywasher left.
Hot summer air so thick with moisture
we'll soon be appendixed with gills for sure;
it amplifies the smells, it carries the breath
of a larger dog barking its brains out
behind the hedge. Unfazed is the poodle:
it likes to circle its owner, or noodle
around a block; it will circle about

its own self if reined in by its master.
It seizes the lead—frame-breaking dancer!—
and bred to splash in after a merganser
tenses at the sight of water, then goes faster.
The heat of the afternoon not at all
suppressing the leaps of a winter dog,
a wooly dog to withstand a Prussian bog,
each leg joint muffed in a burr-ridden ball

against rheumatism, bagging a swan for dinner.
Superstition is the faith that hope has mass
and can knock events off course, just as
sentimentality is faith for the beginner
that the world is accessible to the least of us,
apropos this poodle, Viennoiserie,
croquembouche, schneeball, cannoli.
For all that, for you, we make a fuss.

Ange Mlinko's most recent collection is *Marvelous Things Overheard* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

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