

Moose Lodge, Saturday Night

America looks great and very white  
from the edge of a dance floor full of cowboy hats,  
a liminal zone that serves no craft beer.  
Budweiser's made in Missouri and owned by Belgians.  
My neighbor's buying the rental house next door.  
He's not sure for what. The landlord's  
wrung every dime he could from it  
but last week they heard gun shots from inside.

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The dancing is either in a line or couples  
two-stepping in a big silent circle  
that feels like the earth turning.  
No free-forming here. The women wear  
a broader range of outfits than the men  
from coiffed hair and midcalf gauzy skirts  
to plaid shirts, jeans and big belt buckles,  
the crumpled pink and blue straw  
cowboy hats are girl, pure girl.

We worry about the men—the tight box  
they live in, the way it fits in the big  
sloppy box of whiteness that turned the prairie  
over to Big Ag and the I-wanna-live-  
and-die-in-a-coal-mine crew. We toast my friend's  
beautiful brown family and we toast me,  
an aging queer with a motley family straddling  
the U.S.-Canada border.

They're playing a slow one—  
someone's anniversary. The two can barely  
make it onto the floor to start the dance.  
They don't fight about the gendered division  
of labor anymore. They just make sure  
nobody trips on the dog that's the same color  
as the rug. It hits me someone's going  
to be confirmed, another will be impeached  
but never convicted.

We drink to the newly acquired  
hovel, bullet holes and all.