SANDRA L. FAULKNER

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ODE TO JETLAG

You can be in two places at once,
finally have the here and there
be the same in your fog of where
am I. The language you overhear,
sounds with no meaning,
could be your mother tongue,
English or Deutsch or just noise
you can’t see through,
a peripheral haze with no way
to filter in this place of the in-between
where you can make time stand
to erase the tedium of the everyday.
DEUTSCH KLASSE AM MITTWOCH

Meine Deutschlehrerin asks if I’ve seen Otto’s Apfel,
Hast du seinen Apfel gesehen?

“Jaaaaaaaaaa.” I stutter with emphasis

so the class laughs at the delivery,
my, for once, perfect pronunciation.
I can’t choke out the core of the sentence
tell her where I put Otto’s Apfel,
not the closet nor the Kühlschrank.

Maybe der Apfel ist an der Universität
unter the desk I sat at 21 years ago
in Herr Meinrad’s class, unsere Klatsch
immer about Bier, German plumbing, and fascination
for Gesundheit: I almost see der Apfel, shriveled
and lacking its former heft und fiber
like my language tongue that can’t taste
the difference between hatte und hätte,
my grammar rotten and full of holes, nicht frisch:

Ich hatte den Apfel gegessen.
Ich hätte den Apfel gegessen.

(If only) I had eaten the apple,
I would have eaten the apple (auf Deutsch),
not auf Deutlisch, my hybrid seed of language
that only the other American student in class finds lustig.

Unsere Leherin, Nicola, throws Otto’s apple
unter dem Bus and makes us roll after it, sing
about Präpositionen that change their case when they want:
As we sing, we wave our hands by Otto’s apple, and I imagine Ottos’s Kopf and where I would like to put the Apfel.