

EMILY ROSKO

[If they would yield us but the superfluity while it were wholesome]

The steps were cold—
an ancient cold. We huddled
in lines that wound

through city streets. Stores
boarded with ply, as empty as
our traded-in gloves and shoes.

Mostly we cooperated, most
of the jostling happened behind.
Our hearts, fixed forward, gave off

a blue affection. The scale
tipped this way and that, in one
pan clay, in the other a pyramid

of faceted gems. We were the eyes,
we were weight shifted
foot to foot. This was a capital

moment. The mechanism, armed,
wavered, springs twitched
to settle, mixed swords

and scales, fear and favor.
What would never be ours
hung in the balance.