

Boston Weather, 1980

We couldn't stroll the slate pavements
without tripping over a historic root.
Etched with acid, tilting like a quarterdeck,

they defeated our attempts to walk
a sober line. There's joy in failure,
a thirst for the bas-relief of early middle age,

when the twenties have flown.
That was the winter of your frizzy
permanent, as if you'd stuck a fork

into a socket. Car windows stood
at half mast, drivers not able to stand
artificial heat. The famous photographer

drove me to a frozen lake and took
roll after roll in the low sun. Old salts,
you and I had to leave the country.

Collared Doves

Formal in their conspiracy, they descend
like leaves, pious, shivering

with anticipation. They might
be popes, sleekly muscular,

dressed in grays more
hallucination than vision, infallible

in matters of doctrine. They settle
for the things of this world,

the most fashionable bird
in the country except the European jay.

After the Election

The city had suffered its hours,
breath drawn in silence.
There were cloistered multitudes,
certainly. The mansions

had been decorated with brands,
the streets aglow with torches
slowly unlit. Undignified,
the indignities remained

virginal, the tombs cleansed
with acid and soapstone.
The usual visions had been received
postage due. The sun glimmered faintly

through Constable's glory of cumulus,
while from klaxons angels sang,
again, their praise. Over
the doorways hung branches of rue.

Swan

Love is without law.
—Old proverb

The stained-glass fragment—martyr
with a saw, Simon the Zealot—

hung over a bookcase,
reminder of the obscurity

into which even apostles may fall.
If there were room for books in the exile's

shoulder bag, which would make the cut?
We have aged past reading into re-reading.

We burn most books as we read them,
like longed-for cities on a tourist's

bucket list. Year by year we gorge
on each other, decades after falling in love.

Fall of 1959

The smoking wick of the hurricane lamp,
the day of the hurricane,
invaded our young museum

of odors not to be forgotten.
Upright as a lamppost,
its ghostly green reservoir

like a Portuguese man o' war,
filling as hours without electricity
drained, the lamp glowered,

flickered in the light of the Nativity.
The beam uncurled like a seedling.
The Banshee wind,

my Irish great-grandmother
would have called it, rose
to an unspeakable whine.

Down on the harbor,
boats ricked as the wind
blew the wind gauge off.