

Wild Geese Palinode

But we *do* have to be good, Mary—at least
a little good, right? If we're to have
any hope at all?

Our deserts, I read, were once oceans
and in California an entire lake has come back
from the dead. I don't know anyone who'd walk
through water to resurrect a great
auk, an aurochs, or anything else we ate
into extinction.

Despite your tutelage, I've made a banquet
of repentance, but my soft stomach
never fills.

Meanwhile the world catches on
fire. Meanwhile the sun and the petulant smog
are moving over frackwater; nuclear substations;
reticulated roadways; our panoply of hostile architecture
with its spiked balustrades and grim scouring of rest.

Meanwhile despair's meager provender
ossifies our appetites.

No matter who I become, imagination
widows itself against my loneliness.

I've had enough of despair, Mary.
I love what I love
even as it kills me.
I see your *harsh and exciting* and I raise you one goose
with its beak choked shut by a soda yoke.

You, slurred like a bent dove against your lover's patient hands
and the vanity of death—
devil me now.

Come back like that lake and tell it to me again—tell me
when we'll stop smothering
with the greedy animals of our bodies
this family of things.