

Refugees in Massachusetts

Everyone had to leave in a bloody hurry.
No one had to come here. Those that did—
the ones who should be sorry were not sorry.
The ones who shouldn't be

run restaurants or laundromats or serve you
shyly in the mall. Exquisite hands
show you your change. Or chattily they drive you
when you're too tired to say,

and all the diddy icons on the dashboard
tremble. It's your town and not your town
when you leave tips for them. What's barely whispered
where they meet is true:

they might encounter him from the old world,
who came at night, who giggled at their papers...
Might see him smoking by the baseball field,
padding towards the diner,

lip-reading in the library. He too
escaped here, he too sobbed or stared ahead,
made landfall; he eats pretzels in the queue.
They are aware he's there

both when he is and isn't there. No crimes
will stick in this new life. There is no court
in session for the narratives and claims
their voices split to make,

no angles to examine. There are times
 they jump and times they clasp. There is a wood
 they come to in a downpour, or have dreams
 they come to in a downpour.

Colorado Morning

Looping around the more or less dead straight
 lines where skiers were,

some shy, nocturnal creature's one and only
 shot at its signature.

The Year in Pictures

For the Year-in-Pictures feature,
 that annual old favourite,
 the man behind the night desk

was dealing with five thousand
 possibles at high speed,
 a speed at which his blond head

was shaking and his fingers
 propelling off so many
 the air was never empty

of the white-backed and numbered
 snapshots, as they fluttered
 earthward in succession.

The Strictures of What Was

Nothing that's been does anything but dance.
 Nothing that blinked does anything but stare,
 now being over, though the merest sense
 of *over* is strange there.

They move about. The strictures of what was
 are written, not enforced, so it's a faith
 we could grow used to. Eyes meet other eyes,
 breath holds for breath, or breathes

to depths there never were, in bigger rooms
 for longer drives by bluer seas. What happens
 has been expected and improved in dreams,
 it makes its home in seconds;

Plot is what's recalled, though there was none,
 and Theme, though that's one colour of the seven
 lording it a while. Nothing's to come
 in that place—the word *heaven*

we used for something else, but the word *gone*
 has what it meant in spades: an open space
 the many made in us and only one
 from there could ever close.