

Two White Pigeons

by Jane Olmsted

On this gray day when the May sun
has no burn left to dry the wind,

we return from our walk through
the monastery fields and woods

hungry for hot soup and gazing.
The dark green pond stretches

from window to window of this
rental cottage in the country

where we have retreated
from the gray hovering life

we know. Redwing blackbirds cut
the air and settle in the branches

of a tree that has died and stands
waiting—or savoring—its own

end of story. The shallow waters
ripple in the wind or the wake

of gray geese who paddle to the shores
and dive, but don't die, like the old song,

a-standing on their heads—and how I miss
that old song about Aunt Rhody's gray goose,

a song too sad to bear when I was a girl
who didn't see what was so dangerous

about standing on your head or why someone
would put it all down like that, in a song.

Memory wavers like a shadow, as two
snowy egrets land near the far shore

and begin their long-necked
wading, so intent on subtle movement

they are not startled by the blaze of two
white pigeons that fly out of blue clarity

and stop my breathing, if not my heart—three times
circling the pond in breathless nips and tucks,

stitching up the terrible rending
that has pulled our lives apart.