

## “A Fresco”

All day I've been thinking of the grief  
on each of their faces, Adam and Eve.

The feeling is closest to a wave as it peaks,  
how it seems on the verge of self-consciousness

before it collapses. Their mouths hold  
a single sound that divides, familiar as rain.

The angel points away from the green world  
behind them, out into the nave. I remember

the woman standing there, turned to stone  
at the side altar, and the man next to her,

the back of his overcoat on fire with  
reflected light. They stared straight ahead

at The Expulsion and the cruel, distinct words  
passed between them. Tourists, a corsage at her heart,

his brand new guidebook. What is startling  
is how the fresco works itself out from under

the expectation of color. After a while  
in this air the other spectrum emerges:

no blues or reds but grades of dark and eerie  
white, as the paint thins and the lead extracts

new expressions. They never raised their voices.  
The woman seemed like someone who had been loved,

but without compassion. I don't know about the man.  
I recall the rest of that church now, how

with small fierce gestures, votive fires  
were lit. The two figures burning in effigy.