

*PALMS*

The faithful return to circles. Out walking,  
we come across the church at the hour  
they assemble into cold. And it is cold,  
still, April, my hand in yours. The congregation  
links without touching on the grass,  
their hands occupied with light. I am  
trying to explain how I trust you. Tonight,  
believers hold out their arms for fantails:  
white-edged, splintered, flat. There is singing  
now as we reach the curb. The woman  
leading them understands they will keep  
what she offers, the way the bees returned  
to the farm from summer, each year the cloud  
of them rising from the frost-clipped fields,  
that bone rattle, that haze. So when they  
do not return, you will know they are dead,  
disease sweeping the husks like wind lifting  
the hair of a girl. Next spring the palms,  
brown and curled, will be burnt and returned  
to the body, the black on each forehead,  
a testament to touch, against forgetting.  
Will we be here also a year, our arms  
like cuttings. Then, a wreath.