



Michael Downey

From: It Looks Like I've Been in the City Too Long Blues

I.

On the green sward
that laces the side of the river
across the street,
were two ducks.
From the distance of my high window,
they slept, not far apart.

How many million wingbeats
had they come together?
Where were those nests of mud,
lined with plucked white,
that had warmed to life the shells of selves?
Minnesota, Michigan, or Ontario, —
a place spoken only by a tongue forgotten,
long from this open city of smells and dogs.

Still there these many minutes,
how contended they lie.
Weary of wind and far space,
yet not of each other,
they rest.

II.

Oh my generation, see of this dual whiteness
A symbol of perfection, — you that love well

but not long.

If the downy feathers of one explode in flight,
the mate would circle and paddle alone
the cold waters.

They slumber still;
not in disturbed nearness,
but united in faith by the distance they keep.

A tribute to their love
will I descend from my study,
walk with old bread
that will give them strength,
grateful for their sign of true devotion.

III.

Crossing the street, I sail a breadslice
like a frisbee not halfway to them.
Still they sleep . . .
Something is wrong for wild ducks.
The thought winces if somehow here
they have journeyed to die . . .

Both white McDonalds' sacks,
yellow arches opened at me like eyes.

I crumble crust to the sucking carp.