

○ THE RAIN OF A YEAR
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for the Wayland Academy class of 2004

As the sails of distant ships
seem not to travel seaward,
but to get smaller and disappear,

the event attempts to shrink
like crushed velvet in the rain
of a year. I'll only remember

according to what I saw
my students see on their TVs:
a jumbo jet becomes

a flaming building's flames
and reappears a moment later—
the building whole—to crash again;

the same fire, the same slow
motion buckling. It's the same today;
you can watch on any screen you choose

and try to forget and pray without hope
that one time the walls will withstand
the impact, that the girders will hold,

that the plane might miss
its televised target.
Things will never be the same

again, we've heard. That is,
unless the moments after this
moment hold their shape

and recur. For over a decade, things,
for their part, have indeed been about
the same—just as the time before

was not “before” until the moment
came, the days since are changed
only in how they’re named. Before

has become the canvas
on which the moment sits,
its glassy grays and flaming reds

prime the past and color all
that follows. I crossed Franklin Street
to school and watched the reach of ivy

turning gold against the ragged bricks
of Warren Cottage, the dormitory
windows that have framed the lives

of teenaged girls since long before
I came—and I think that I’ll never
not think again of people leaping,

hands held, to avoid the inferno.
This too is different than before
and the same as yesterday. I’ll never

not think of anything again.
I took roll and told my tired sophomores
how Thoreau was right, that to know

what that is which was never old might be
more important than what’s known as “news,”
adding however how a single blackened date

can bleed through a calendar,
smudging squares for stacks of months
to come, keeping old news new.