

CITY PIGEONS ●

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Don't you love the way they humble us—
crapping on the manes of the august
New York Public Library lions
and the pate and cape of the gleaming bronze
of William Tecumseh Sherman
in the Grand Army Plaza,
and the crest and croup of the horse
he's mounted on and even on the outstretched arm
of the angel standing on the pedestal before him.

More egalitarian than the American eagle,
from its cloaca the white goop
is as likely to land on salon blonde hair
as the disheveled greasy mop of the guy
in camouflage pants hunched on a milk crate
that leans against the locked metal gate
of Gramercy Park or the transparent plastic raincoat
of the old woman who strews crumbs from a bag,
pigeons on her shoulders and bobbing
at the toes of her molded shoes.

How ordinary, a city pigeon, gray as soot,
but ah, the green iridescence of its neck
in sudden sunshine and the wide-eyed gaze
of my five-year-old granddaughter
from rural upstate, throwing her head back
to see them roosting on ledges.
“Keep your mouth closed,” I warn.

One afternoon, inside Penn Station, a flock of pigeons
flies overhead, some landing on Jamba Juice,
others on Dunkin' Donuts, the rest on CVS.
I look forward to seeing them again,
but the next morning, they are gone.