

TURNING 40 IN PORTSMOUTH SQUARE ●

Carolyn Wilsey

In Chinatown today, the unhappy air
puffed with cigarette smoke, my mouth
filled with the sudden loose teeth
of an old woman without children,
my jaw a leather strap

Birds thread their torpedo bodies
through trees
in a gray mist of knowing
how not to shatter themselves

Red lantern shades fit
like a film over my mouth,
gray pigeon daylight
clamping a scream I never unclamped,
but it lifts, with amazement

Beating into the fog,
spraying into a score of club-footed pigeons,
their flight does
a little of the work for me,
pulling me into the sky