

HARASSED BY THE DARK AGES

It's not surprising I have Dark Age dreams,
after the books I've read. A frightened woman
is sitting at the edge of the world.

It's early twilight, chilly. Something's burning
farther east, but whether leaves or logs
or community itself, I can't determine;

something's always burning in the past.

This woman has hidden all her words
and only hopes to leave a legacy.

Songs, a story. Letters. That's absurd.

The newest epidemic came with strangers
escaping inland, and soon the usual flood

of Goths will be sludging through the marsh.

The throatless eloquence of fire
will squelch all narrative. She'll plead,

Let me remain myself, if nothing more!

She dies several ways. I wake depressed
and frazzled. It's a self-indulgent fear,

a series of apocalyptic jimjams
caused by our not-so-Roman peace,
plus living through a freaking hurricane
and flood. I want to beg, *Please, please,*
no more anthrax, no more crazy bombers
until my newest book's released,

*though honestly, I maybe wouldn't mind
if half the Baby Boomers writing poems
caught that long-predicted influenza,
thinning the herd. If there's another storm
the manuscript is stowed in Box 13
at Regions Bank. Pity the forewarned*

who bury their copyrights and silver
under the roots of designated trees,
thinking an oak will last. They'll mourn
and dream of luxuries: identity;
invention; creative self-destruction;
that sweetest of indulgences, complexity.