

Judith Clark

Wild Geese

—after *Mary Oliver*

Wild geese
in the morning fog
appearing as they do after each
frozen graveyard winter, with
 squawks, flying feathers and
 shit everywhere
to summer among groundhogs,
skunks, preening blue jays
 who plunder the finches' nests,
stray pigeons and lost city women

One goose waddled up to my offering hand,
snapped up the bread whole
staring into my eyes so sternly,
 like Mama,
I had to grab my fleeing courage
until I realized, with relief, that
I was not a guilty child,
just a haunted convict

Perhaps she is the great, great, great
grand-daughter of that first goose who,
sixteen years ago,
stared at me through the steel mesh covered
window of the solitary confinement cell,
whose sorrowful, penetrating eyes
broke through the death spell

ordering me
to live