

William Matthews

Heedless

Years later she'd tell anyone who knew
 them both how she and he had lived a year
 together, and then he'd had a—here
 she'd enunciate—*nervous breakdown*
 when she refused to marry him.

None of this true. It made him dark with shame,
 not to have known her then but to be bland
 now while she still bore her acid passion
 like a souvenir. It seems another life,
 he'd muse, not thinking how one night he'd toured
 his house, throwing on all the lights until
 anywhere he looked was blare. And he lay down
 and closed his eyes and everything was still
 light, shadowless light, and a new woman.

Breath held its breath, the passive voice strode in,
 and the sentence carried itself out.
 Love fell on them like stars in Alabama.
 Beware the speed of verbs. They got involved,
 were seen together, seeing each other.
 They were stories and told them to them-
 selves, though after those exactions, and soon,
 when they rose a last time from bed, they left
 them there, like uncorrected proofs, almost
 as if to have something besides themselves,
 some testament, to be unfaithful to.