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A City on Fire

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A CITY ON FIRE

maddy wendell

I. green leaves shift by the window,
branches too far to scrape the sides
as the train whizzes like a lethargic firecracker,
whistling and wheezing across the countryside.
she wonders at how fast the train chugs, her
mother turns and smiles –
here she can forget the bombs
dropping on london, the fact
that the one-room schoolhouse she
attends has multiplied with
refugees from the city on fire.
her father flies for her, spread wings stitched
to his blue uniform,
as she runs through the small
town, old manor always rising on the hill
beside the graveyard.

II. I sit and wonder at the green passing
my eyes much more quickly than it did when she was a girl.
my granny turns, white hair poufing and smile gleaming –
here I can remember when we walked from her house
to the old manor on the hill
beside the graveyard.
the city on fire has been rebuilt –
we walked through the cobbled streets and rose
our eyes to the tops of history.

III. well not quite – the city on fire
has moved, and here we can forget the screams
of the people on fire.
too bad our senses can't travel across oceans
to find the burning city
to help the ashen people.
too bad we can't multiply the little girls
and boys in the one-room schoolhouse,
because the schoolhouse is a nation
and the little girls and boys hold the night in their skin.