

LORNA KNOWLES BLAKE

Washashores

September, and the garden's blown
and bolted, wren and finch have flown
south, and the sun sets farther down

the bay each passing night. We hate
the thought of leaving; contemplate
alternatives, as if this bright

and ample season could endure
beyond the calendar's secure
curfew, but Labor Day is here

and autumn is ready to sue
for possession. What do we do?
Procrastinate, then pack and go—

my books, your music, linen clothes
and one more summer is foreclosed
upon by rituals such as these:

stacking canoes and wicker chairs,
arguing over small repairs
required by weather or the years.
Where is the pulse of a home? What
is the soul of a house? That
marriage of dwelling and spirit?

Perhaps it's in the flow of tide,
a herring gull's suspended glide,
the constant birdsong in the shade

reminding us: *you are, you are.*

Then just before we load the car
the house fills with the airy fire

of sunset and we shroud the place
in bedding, a green-sprigged embrace
of percale and flannel and fleece.

Is it love, I wonder, when we're done
or time we're shielding from the sun,
beneath these sheets that we slept on?