

Holy Places

My morning commute today took me past the city park
where ducks of all faiths quarrelled
over the early bread
the walkers had delivered.

Around the bend in the road
the edifice of a splendid convent stood in silent testimony
to a time when religion lived
behind solid walls.

At the edge of its thinly frozen grounds
a grotto, with its statues of children and the Lady
they alone could see,
endured the protection of an orange storm fence.

Further out the road,
past the substantial houses with snow on their roofs,
the downtown opened damp and grey,
the air saturated with the flood of morning.

Then, at an intersection by a hotel with Christmas lights
I watched a broken man
support a shopping cart laden with recyclables.
Graced with a smile
he hurried slowly towards a second chance.

James Stockwood