

For Mark Rothko · Jorie Graham

Shall I say it is the constancy of persian red  
that permits me to see  
this persian red bird  
come to sit now  
on the brick barbecue  
within my windowframe. Red,

on a field made crooked  
as with disillusion or faulty  
vision, a backyard in winter  
that secretly seeks a bird. He has  
a curiosity  
that makes him slightly awkward,

as if just learning  
something innate, and yet  
there is no impatience,  
just that pose of his  
once between each move  
as if to say, and is *this* pleasing?

When I look again he is gone.  
He is easy to imagine  
in flight: *red extended flame*  
I would say, or, *ribbon*  
*torn from a hat rising once*  
*before it catches*

*on a twig, or*  
*flying painted mouth . . .*  
but then how far  
have we come?  
He could fly now  
into a moment of sunlight

that fell from the sun's edge  
ten thousand years ago,  
mixed in with sunlight  
absolutely new.  
There is no way to understand  
the difference. Some red

has always just slipped from  
our field of vision, a cardinal  
dropping from persian to magenta to white so slowly  
in order that the loss  
be tempted  
not endured.