

THE CROSSING SQUARE

Grace Schulman

Squinting through eye-slits in our balaclavas,
we lurch across Washington Square Park
hunched against the wind, two hooded figures
caught in the monochrome, carrying sacks

of fruit, as we've done for years. The frosted, starch-
stiff sycamores make a lean Christmas tree
seem to bulk larger, tilted under the arch
and still lit in three colors. Once in January,

we found a feather here and stuffed the quill
in twigs to recall that jay. The musical fountain
is here, its water gone, a limestone circle
now. Though rap succeeds the bluegrass strains

we've played in it, new praise evokes old sounds.
White branches mimic visions of past storms;
some say they've heard ghosts moan above this ground,
once a potter's field. No two stones are the same,

of course: the drums, the tawny pears we hold,
are old masks for new things. Still, in a world
where fretted houses with facades are leveled
for condominiums, not much has altered

here. At least it's faithful to imagined
views. And, after all, we know the sycamore
will screen the sky in a receding wind.
Now, trekking home through grit that's mounting higher,

faces upturned to test the whirling snow,
in new masks, we whistle to make breath-clouds form
and disappear, and form again, and O,
my love, there's sun in the crook of your arm.



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