

They Burned Hettie's House

*Pilgrim the past becomes prayer
becomes remembrance rock-real of Resurrection
when the Willer so willeth works his wild wonders*

-Fred Chappell

Her voice spans decades then there is silence.
I know she wants judgment but it is just
a fire company's practicality so I turn
to gardens and grandchildren.

I don't tell I'm glad it is gone, old grey fox
sad-sinking to earth or that Gran liked change,
season diversions, especially heat- her fall
garden burnings, rosebush tongues of fire
sun curled to hold fragrances simmering jam,
peppercorns in hot mash to help hens lay;
chicken manure quilts around peach trees.

Now at night, kindling baskets fill with books
once kept beside a stove. Snow white leghorns
fly like doves and embered carp swim in clumps
of oxblood trilliums. Whole note acorns harmonize
with eighth nose raindrops, tin roof sparklers
and all is flame but nothing burns and nothing
in Hettie's house is consumed.