

THE SWAN

I

Andromache, I think of you. Here men
move on, diminished, from those grander years,
when Racine's tirades scourged our greasy Seine,
this lying trickle swollen with your tears!

Some echo fertilized my magpie mind,
as I was crossing the new Carrousel.
Old Paris is done for. (Our cities find
new faces sooner than the heart.) Its shell

was all I noticed, when I strolled beneath
its barracks, heaps of roughed-out capitals,
stray apple carts, troughs, greening horses' teeth,
commercial gypsies clinking in their stalls.

A strolling circus had laid out its tent,
where I was dragging home through the dawn's red;
labour was rising, and a sprinkler spread
a hurricane to lay the sediment.

I saw a swan that had escaped its cage,
and struck its wings on the cobbled street,
and drenched the curbing with its fluffy plumage.
Beside a gritty gutter, it dabbed its feet,