

The Peacocks

I raised my bedroom blinds one pumpkin yellow morning
in October
And saw, in some surprise, three peacocks,
Proud as princes,
On my lawn.
I say "surprise" for this is cool New England
Where no palm trees grow,
Where one sees pheasants, pigeons, partridges perhaps,
But seldom peacocks.
The police sergeant on duty (and whom would you call to
inquire about peacocks on your lawn?)
Laughed and said they were not second cousins to pink
elephants.
The peacocks were quite real, he told me, raised by a
near neighbor of mine,
A newcomer from out west somewhere -- a queer chap.
He laughed again, his laughter implying that anyone
who harbored peacocks
Could not possibly be one of us.
I thought, as I put down the phone, I'd like to pay
this man a call,
Explain perhaps about the trespassers on my lawn
And ask him why he kept them.
And then I thought, "I'd better not."
He might in turn ask me some questions.
"Why do you sometimes sit with your fists clenched
And your thumbs turned in?
Why do you keep three round pebbles,
Smooth as pearls,
Among your handkerchiefs?
And why can you not bear the sound of penny-whistles?"
I looked out the window once again into the golden
morning.
The peacocks were gone.
I have never seen them since.
But sometimes at night I hear them.
Their shrill cries bite through the smooth stillness of
New England.

-- Margaret O. Slicer
Needham, Mass.