

D.S. MARTIN

THE ASTOUNDED SOUL

—expanding an analogy from Maurice Manning

When I was a child
prayer was something carefully opened
& closed a linen closet
with a handle-twist at the outset
& a distinct click at the end

A poem of iambic precision
with edges folded in so seams
won't show every wrinkle
steamed into submission
on the ironing board

But now sheets & pillowcases seem
more at home on the bed or sailing the line
like Wilbur's swelling angels flapping bird-like
in the air with a muted whip-crack
as heard from the boys' changeroom after swim

Some fabrics are for common use
the everyday tablecloth slightly askew
the towel draped over the blue
beach chair a comfort
when the sun goes in

The formal linen remains unused
behind the door but the towels & washcloths
uneven in the bathroom almost tumbling
to the floor do what they're called to
Even a poem can rub us clean