

At the New York State Museum

I obsess about the wired flight
of stuffed starlings, how despite
their nature, they do not snap
at the songbirds in this mobile,
nor call – car sirens and snags
of dialogue in the throat.
Their freckled chest heaveless
and the hard marbles of their eyes
black as punctuation.

Does every state have birds strung
to a ceiling? In my hometown,
these same histories – the colonial
specter in the statehouse lit up
behind glass, the limed dome
before its new pennyness.
At our state museum, a barricade
of palmettos, cannonballs like wet
footprints, dioramas of wrens
and red hawks straining to break
their bent tethers, high windows
sealed to their escape.