Jim Johnstone

289 at the Gaslamp

Forty one meters per second from hip to head,

body a faultline, splitting and returning to rest.

Cumulus settled, seams still in lanolin and twine—

the first strike, crowd a gasp of discord and dust.

Satchel Paige shifts his weight, the ease of flight

numbing his fingers, our small screen’s cathode picture.

Tonight, Crossbills alight on palms at the Gaslamp,

circle our table like outlaw planets, hardballs

veering from their nebulous spin. In a haze of sepia,
clusters of birds pitch their wings
at the dark, tighten

their round breasts like fists.
Arm finding rhythm

Satch releases again, hand open,
locked in a half-wave.