

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