

White Dinner Jackets, Black Bow Ties

you stopped playing long ago
without an audience, what is music anyway
notes meant to be shared
are just sound waves careening in a vacuum

three rows of musicians
white dinner jackets, black bow ties,
a Girl singer and a Band leader
...and His Orchestra a draped satin flourish

once, you showed me how to moisten the reed
like a communion wafer, on the tongue
how to cradle the saxophone's girth
cumbersome as a sleepy toddler

but you had no patience, cadence and chords
as alien to me as Gillespie and Goodman
so you laid the alto sax and A-flat clarinet
to rest in their peeling leather cases

a brief spark, electrons crackling into air
your jazzy whistle came home after work
lost to wind and time, fading,
like satellite transmissions, like memory.