Planes
Based on Georges Braque’s *Bird of the Woods* or *Bird XVII* (1958)

A broken wing
of brittle glass
and two tails:
'58 Cold War charm thinking of
Christmas, A-bombs, Reds,
and a Korea that wouldn’t recover;
Parisian Londoners—who survived the smoke,
the nights
green and black of buildings and bodies and jet fuel
with just enough
Soviet currency
to pay the ferryman—
saw birds, they say, with silver beaks and silver faces and silver wings
that seemed blue from the face of the sky
and never landed,
*but we heard them fall*, they said, *we heard the crash*
from the Tubes

they flapped instead their wings instead
into schoolday mornings
and downtown city streets
in the nook of a Tuesday
sometime in the 21st century;
where TV sets saw silver birds with silver beaks
silver tails and silver wings blue from the face of the sky—
that never landed

but flew through the void
as light as a signature;

*but we knew they fell*, they said, *we smelled the steel*,
*we felt the heat, we saw what was left*—

a city the shape of a shadow
& skyscrapers made only of smoke.