

Two Wood Pigeons

The lilac extends a woody limb,
crabbed with age yet springy, to offer

a welcome to this familiar couple,
plump and comfy on their rocker

as it dips and sways in the breeze
and under their meticulous preening,

enough room between them to stretch
a wing skyward, spread coverts and

primaries for inspection. Then each
pearl-grey feather lapped softly over

shoulders and back must be checked
and smoothed. Now the under-wing fluff –

fuss and draw that too through the beak's skill.
To take a peek and a peck below your tail,

coil your blue-grey neck over and into
a feather knot of the whole body.

Undo it, zip up long flight feathers again.
Lift a claw to scratch a putative chin.

Is a pigeon's work never done?
How can I describe it as thoroughly

as they groom, though I match their
diligence with my own watching,

forgetful of everything beyond
the process and precision of fettling

words that against all odds might lift, bear
and float their burden on air?