

Marc Swan

9:15 TO BUENOS AIRES

You have to have lived, to have suffered,
to understand the tango ... taxi driver in Buenos Aires
"The Tango Lesson"

In her widow's dress, hair dyed black,
piled high on her 36-year-old head,
she could be a peasant shucking
peas in a sun-stuck Sicilian doorway,
grandchildren laughing nearby,

except she lies flat, alone.
I knew little of this woman who smoked
generic cigarettes, swore, chattered
in a relentless monotone — her questions

bit huge chunks of the hazy blue air.
No more talk-talk, no more hazy blue air.
My wife knew this woman six years, pictures
her lying in bed, pillow pulled tight
over her eyes — in her secret place,

a place where her older sister, murdered
in a drug deal gone awry, never visits,
where her mother diagnosed with a brain
tumor is well and happy. Her father tips

his back felt fedora to all who pass by.
His daughter is safe, in a good place.
She caught the 9:15 to Buenos Aires
where high wind whistles through thick
black hair as she twirls over polished tile.

