

Forgotten Birds

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*“Sleep is not death
but forgotten birds.”
—David Hoag*

1

The black-cassocked crow
broods in the eucalyptus
where blood-red umbellates
breathe out the odor of camphor.
As the graves grow green
and spring missiles its
multitudinous wings,
his shadow falls and
falls and
further falls
over the grasses,
over the greening,
beyond the growing.

2

Listening to kites
I hear all along
the long string
the wind vibrating,
its wild hum, a poly-
rhythm strummed
in air. This paper bird
pasted to a thin wooden
cross flies in the sky

like a fragile Icarus,
kept in air only by the thinnest
skein of desire.

I'd like to get away from earth,
soar to the sun, hide
in the spaces between
stars, but always
with some thread
to find my way home
to the labyrinth.

3

The cirrus blooms once,
one night only its opaline
fragrance gossamers the saguaro,
prickly pear, and manzanita, then
withdraws into a dark tuber to await
another blossoming in another year.

But every morning, every
afternoon, dark finger-
tipped wings circle
the desert sky, their narrowing gyres
the vortex of death. In dreams
I swirl down toward darkness as
a pearl-like flower rises higher
and higher above me.

4

The day I cut the locusts
on Huckleberry Island,
my chain saw spitting

thick sappy sawdust into
the heavy air, one tree,
bound and tethered by ivy,
wouldn't fall.

I guyed it with ropes and
cut it in sections
then noticed I had cut
a bird's nest in half,
the fledgling jay clinging
to the severed cup.

That night I dreamed the bird,
terror of staccato saw and
our black cat climbing.
The next morning I ran
to see the nest.

5

I flew to Christ in fits
and starts, yet he caught,
held me in the tight
fist of his grace.
When I fled from his nails
he opened his palm
to let me fly. Kited
by his fierce love, I soared
toward the surgical sun
then swooned into the nest
of his cupped right hand.
His crown was beryl and
bloodstone. His left arm
was raised to the square.