

*Wilderness House Literary Review 3/4*

Matthew Zingg

**Dear Prometheus: I've seen the birds...**

dusting off the powerlines, taking the low roads  
of the sky, waiting atop abandoned thrones. I've seen  
the stolid absense of a hawk that leans towards  
nothing, or the manic sketches of a sparrow who is  
only one step ahead in his mind. I've seen the shapes  
they take in large numbers, how they move  
in some ameobic portent or worse, alone, in the rolling  
arc of a letter circling the nest of the sun.

this is the one that knows us best, knows every bloody detail  
and inside part, and what we look like naked.

This one checks the way we smile when the heavens  
scorn our lack of regret and appreciates the taste  
of pride, how it sits heavy and digests slowly,  
how hard it is to rip from the bone.

yes, I've seen the birds, clapping over a fresh kill,  
and I thought of you.

**Nights/Days**

It is times like these that I can trace the regret  
caught between the darkness and my bedroom window,  
when you and I are reflected in the night, suspended  
like vampires. Remember how I hid my hand over yours

and how cold it was?  
Remember then, that I was afraid  
because I was dead next to you. My touch  
was just a shadow against your skin.

Now we stare outside at a reality where I was born  
a second too late and you an hour early or maybe  
in a different city. A place where, tomorrow,  
you wouldn't be a hundred miles away  
outside another window with another ghost.  
Though I cannot say my mornings aren't spent

dancing around a cup of coffee with a womanly apparition,  
my regret does not come from any lack of light  
but from a misunderstanding of the suddenness of love.

**Caligula**

If you want the moon  
then it is not impossible to level the sky and earth  
or to set death aside life. If you want the moon  
then you will find her testing the edge of a dark pond.  
Catch her in a glistening web of water leaves  
and weeds, take her home to your cloisters and the stars  
will be jealous. They will conspire against you  
in some hidden passageway or dusky basement,  
and happiness will be their accomplice since freedom,  
long ago, was enslaved by your basest logic.

The stars, your patricians,  
wear the masks of furtive onlookers. They understand,  
there is no doubt about that, but it is this that scares them the most,  
that they too have dreamt of the uncommitted murder  
and the power it requires.

And what of the moon?  
when the stars, day and night, come to you  
in sharp poetic visions,  
she will be indifferent to your rebirth.