

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Martin Willitts Jr.

"Forever is composed of nows" — Emily Dickinson

Do not wait for things to begin —
a robin does not wait for permission to lay eggs,
the day does not miss an appearance,
rivers construct music without a composer —

make things happen — open a drawer —
release ghosts of the past — dust never settles
when in light. Tranquil is for things without aspirations.
Thousands of things are happening while you are waiting.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Rapture

An assemblage of birds is hiding in their own calling.
Their music is raspberries.
All through, thick sheet music of fog lingers,
hovering low to the changing ground and above
in autumnal-harsh light. And the light's astonished response
is to migrate. It's unexpected, yet anticipated,
thumbing throughout the departure of days. This calling
is interwoven. It is damp and is memorized differently.
Back to the way things used to be. It assumes from that
what things will be. This unsung chattering
goes deep into the redness of a cold morning. There is
emptiness afterwards, a piercing as the deep chill,
and it is tuneless.

In the low-sung air, there is a burn-off, unraveling
as the absence of cardinals. What is that calling?
What use is it? There is no umber sky being called forth.
Nothing speaks in silence. The ground flutters and flits.
Music is a waiting river, moving out of intense hunger.
Scarlet birds blend into the bleeding, burnished, skies.
Their shadows imagine songs impossible to sing. Once over,
it is over: a river roving onto other things.

We believe this amber forest was always this red,
its leaves flapping. The clap of thunderheads
is a clump of teeming cardinals, slapping their way out of branches,
up into the aggregation, dredging up their brightness,
bristling with dew, releasing themselves from guilt, into the sunrise,
disintegrating into an epiphany, scattered as weather,
until we all recognize what we are meant to recognize.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

This is no normal awakening from silence into song.
The hush from the hickories is astonishing
in the afterlight. It is in the blaze of foglift.
This is the unexpectedness.
When there is a calling, we too will respond.
The crimson sky will be our awakening
into a music of our own making.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Good News

The robin is bringing its 2AM news.
It is not the bible Good News,
although it could be preaching the Gospel
according to what it has seen
during its flight. Instead it brings
news that it is nesting.

Throughout the night it strands together music
into a nest of Love, each note a rosary bead
Then, there is a call-back response
from somewhere in the congregation.

Tell it. Tell it preacher bird.

There is nothing more powerful than Love —
There is nothing more heart-making
or more heart-breaking;
nothing more defining in the morning,
than the conversion into the baptism of Love.

Tell me, all-night hallelujah singer,
what are the psalms of the awakening heart?
I am desperate for this message.
I thirst in the window with such a deep longing.
I am restless with such knowledge
that I want to join the sacred message.
I am in the choir-loft of the treetops,
and I cannot get any closer to this holy message.

I shall rise in hymn.
I will open to the chapter and verse of Love.
I will find my place, and mark it
with my tracing finger, underscoring the passage
as I recite along with you, each note flying.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

In the name of heaven and earth,
I sing with praise,
emphasizing each note,
lifting them up the scales of Love,
into the rafters of the stars,
so everything is in the music
and Love triumphs over everything.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Black-capped Chickadee

"I hope you love birds too. It is economical. It saves going to heaven."

— Emily Dickinson

Black-capped Chickadee (*Penthestes atricapillus*)

You may be the size of a whisper —
but I hear your pleas, your exhalations,
your design upon the blueprint of sky.

You do not leave, you do not migrate,
you are faithful when others are not.
You are cheerful when others are downcast.

You are the sound of summer rain.
You can warn, or contact others
in discernment and abandonment.

You hide seed in the crook of a branch
while I put my jams in the root cellar.
I sing of you while you sing of profound bliss.

O, if I were just as joyous — knowing pleasure
in the everyday assurances,
flittering in music stanzas of branches.

My songs would fly into the stars —
into the arms, gracious arms, held,
like waiting for mending of broken wing.

Ah, if only. Tell me bird — what is it like?
Build a nest of truth from what you find.
Share with me what you know.