

THERE IS A BIRDSONG AT THE ROOT OF POETRY

FOR ANN LAUTERBACH

Hemmed in by an un-
tenable image:
feathers planted
below fragile branches
of avian feet scaly crossroads scoring
a particular blue of sky
offending
through the uselessness of misplaced
forms thorny prongs
that make no sense (and yet belong)
on the ground
out of which
the bird wings stiffly jut
rigid as
rhubarb leaf.

Should you
kneel the body's aged mechanism
beneath the shade of dry feathers,
should you
angle the vulnerable cavern
of ear—trembling passage to psyche's
failures our fall
into suffering knowledge—toward the root
should you
listen you will hear

the wasted strains of an underground song
rising from the muffled beak: site of a perverse smothering
throated core submerged
deadened by thoughtless depths
but alive
for the dead have kept it
safe from false music
a ghoulish guard of LOVE
SAFE from
Psyche
she who
bullied by the cruelty of others
the sophistication of fashionable libraries
the envy of those
who would molest the world into false confessions
and banish all mystery
with their dripping
candles she who would
unearth the birdsong to cage it
she who will end by destroying what she loves most.
Shhhh, quiet
listen:
it is drawn by other amblers
its strains awake in our attentions
as a sudden bewildering happiness
ear wedded to earth, *listen*
and hear
what those who know all
can not.

A FOOLISH CONSISTENCY

There is a fine reversal of desire
that subtly turns to face
the wake of years hard spent
refining taste,
reading this but never that, learning to
discriminate
against the prejudice of time, at first,
but later in ad-
herence to its
logic.

Discrimination
narrows
options,
about which we are
breathless in our youth, when time is an
endless, omniscient thing
just beyond the ego—toxic mercury
bolting from undisciplined
voracious hungers.

When I was young
I courted
the unfathomable permanence
of books. Back then, before the internet, they were
so difficult to find. And seemed a miracle.
Especially rare, neglected books
of rare, neglected knowledge.

The spiked-up enthusiasms of the gung-ho
are easily winded
when shapeless. Life and death insights
in the classroom
vanish
when pedaling home
with thoughts of food, a favorite show,
a stiff tag
scratching the skin
of your infant
neck. No idea could compete
until I fell
in love
with work. The painful shaping
of discrimination
kept that love at bay. I was afraid
to write a thing I did not mean, and knew not what I meant.
Underneath the ego's needs
an unsuspected
truth
awaits, which all unfixd I went towards
through composition's problems. Discrimination told me
poetry could solve them.
A few wrong loves along the way
have all but been
forgotten, shed
in the refinement
of belief. A fine reversal
of desire

has taken shape. Its genesis erased.

I can't look back

or forward, and though

I'm still misled

by love, it doesn't feel

like love

at all, but just

a vague sensation

of what was once not

and now

is.