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Untitled

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MANDE ZECCA

Untitled

Winner, 2009 Patricia Goedicke Prize in Poetry

The heart is full, the world is void.

Infinite and mysterious,

Thrills through us a sweet trembling —

Novalis

Split the Lark — and you'll find the Music —

Emily Dickinson

Little singer in the mirror, who put a torch to your tendings? Who minded your hand-to-the-wind dispersals, your mending needle's sting? Stuck at the white edge of winter's yew time, its yellow mornings all rolled out to the hills, who'd beg a tune-up, a cradle-careful whisper to ease you into time's dark ache? Bone and brine, then you've named the grasses. Stitch and urch. Who calls you—lark in a gum tree—from below the roots?

This break behind the eye, I named it song. I am the sugar girl done up
in marl. My voice lurks, obsidian, in the ore-slip. So Baroque in its awed
arabesques. So still in its boll-mouthed moanings. I sink in the murk of
its dusk-hollow sound. When wrought becomes rough—what you never
thought an angel wing was—I scuttle, animal eyed, out to the meadow.
Where the dove waits in the space I named in the larch.

I stood lost, playing host to a crowd's dual dispersions. Violet duets in evening's bombed-out air. O, nation! In your saltwhite robes. What good is my gull-winged capital when, thick with ticksex, the doves disperse? We asked for asphodel, got acres pitted with ash. Rangy pasturage. Dross. Then there's the grain that nets the heart. That the dirt is holy. That it grits the skin. We are the grass the wind shakes through.

Hiding the music in our impossible beards, we enter the garden. Our dollish heads abob with dew. A mass of scent and skin. Epiphanic, a cricket rubs its hind parts. It is different from the instrument. Origin's sponge. The hand's musculature. Here in the garden, manacled variations of infinite rhyme. Here, we parse no original blood. What we keep to ourselves as we enter the aviary. Where ache and arc are part and counter. Part the breath of swallows. Part hunger at the tips of the leaves. Envy us our clangy music, our soft underbellies no language could erase. No white space ends without letting some tune fail.

Where does the body end and what does it wound in its wanderings? Girl-of-the-valley, whistling coal's ever-lonely tune, where does your voice eddy out? The sun drains the sky and I can open a bird like a clock. On this last of the Dog Star days, how do I refuse despair? Weave a wreath of irises sings the maybird. Tiny miner of the heart's carbon. It is dungeon-dark when we lurch into the world. Sounds, then a word's first fullness. Stench of departure still clinging to morning's paw. A rind afloat on a black sea. Small matter, this rib removed from the world. Poor world, no bigger than a stitch.

Hang, and like a mourner's song, begin to unravel. Like the song of knowing one dark line traverses anything to form a cross. A hanging angle is no angel, but a hand knit with lines corresponds to a stutter of birds across sky. The sun hums its numbers. A veil with a tendency to guild. Who would salt the stone? The treble in the bee-green bower? As crows push toward an idea of west, loosed in redheavy dusk, You sits perched in a tree the noon light filters through. Where, the owlthrob warns.

Down Persephone-wise, down apple grasping corridors of song. One
endless darkness blows into being. O heart, that you'd have a hive's
architecture. O these hands a-done violence to them birds. Augur or
birdskull or cavernous awe I could enter. So that war stops wafting from the
linnet's lungs, I stop up its throat with wool. Mites in the roots. Flies rising
from the slick backs of the dead. The dictation could not be transcribed. It
could not be—

Who could disturb such Arcadian echoes? Whose ardencies could coerce the branch to bend? Poor Philomel. The sound slipping out of her mouth into hours. Scrim of time. If one could sharpen one's eyes to the sound of glass, to the movement of steam like the ghost time of a poem. That the eye'd open a little. That the under-spoken psalms would emerge, heavy and birdclawed. Read devotes for dovecotes. The bird, here, is belief.