

## Transmission

Red-tailed vortex of air spiraling  
above the freeway, shimmering heat

of a thousand valley vehicles pulsing  
a signal, midday thermal currents invite

a dozen wheeling hawks. A kettle  
organizes like a ladder of angels,

a summons to float freely,  
immersed in the higher home.

My longing, a grounded bird,  
thrashes against the metal and traffic but

they rest on wings of another  
for a little, soar on the flow, talons and

beaks above and below, on tongues  
of exhaust. They glory round

the cell tower, disguised as a too-emerald,  
too-stiff palm. They ring the blue finger

of God. The transmission requires a path;  
my displaced breath of words the updraft,

a wrestling reach sunward, carried high  
and higher. The warmth, the movement, the center

builds, a wafting whole, a transient channel,  
permeable gyre of connectivity, a sky road even

wingless I could take: open the roof, give my eyes  
to the dazzle, repeat like a mantra, like Dorothy

in Oz, like Mary of Bethany, repeat  
the need for only one thing.

“Transmission” was first published in *Relief: A Journal of Art and Faith*.

## Unexpected Wings

Ninety-one degrees even as the sun flickers low,  
my son stands tall, epicenter of buzzing children,  
unruly excited bees to his sweet nectar: soccer.

They have little, but every week grow rich in runs,  
breathless goals, high-fives, and him; even  
before he gets out of the car they call his name.

They flock eagerly around him, try their feet at it,  
kick, try again. A boy falls in facedown sprawl,  
cries in the grass. My son kneels at his side, but he

will not stand. My son speaks soft words I cannot  
hear, and I see his hand, patting the shaking back.  
Someone near me says autistic, the child is autistic,

as if tears can be shut up neat and put away there.  
The boy sits up suddenly, sobs I fail I fail I fail. I  
cannot think who of us does not. My son coaxes

the boy onto trembling feet. And here is the thing,  
my son keeps his hand on the boy's shoulder as  
infinite moments tick by, and wherever he walks

on the field, the boy stays right next to him, under  
his arm. The ball bumps, the kids zig and zag,  
the sunset a gold whirl of unexpected wings.

“Unexpected Wings” was first published in *Whale Road Review*

## **Via Negativa: Mourning Dove**

Sightless in morning fog,  
she laces fallen fibers

of fan palm, bunchgrass,  
the birch's lost twigs,

spins an empty creation.  
Conifer needles, the fox's hair

round out the void,  
what was cast off and left

for dead now the dwelling,  
twined with stippled space

of eggs to come, primeval  
point of departure, dawn

chorus chipping the dark.  
Wings rustle, expand

the hollow, nothing  
yet something, expectant.

“Via Negativa: Mourning Dove” was first published in *First Things*.

## Substance Theory

The skin of the persimmon is not what it used to be

Who is to say that it is a less lovely sphere dulled to ripe auburn pulp  
and although pecked, sun-patched.

The tree speaks them tenderly into being each season. Each in turn turns to teach  
the turn to the one sweet heat.

A hachiya meets its appointments, matures beyond the astringent orange sheen,  
reaching for Teresa reaching for Thérèse reaching for Teresa reaching for the utter center  
of the divine diamond fruit, an arrow into flame

and in living flame, leaps and ignites the next. Incandescent in the setting gold embrace,  
she gathers her ruddy round wisdom, flares her warm fragrance on high:

I have kept both fresh and mellowed in store for you, my love.

I can say I love ardently, I will say we cradle stars

I can say I hold the key, I will say we usher others through.

Root wither, wind bite and branch bend lead us here, a final kiss for the crumbling  
leaf crown, a release of the heavy soft body

In the time of their visitation they will shine, and dart about as sparks through stubble;

Perhaps you will just make out the glimmer of each autumnal halo in the dusk,  
and it will light something inside, in the juiced middle, near the seed-heart

Who is to say the puckered rusted red flesh  
is less lovely when it may be taken,  
consumed, and dissolved  
into molecules into  
acid nebula into  
fusion into  
fire

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