A Meteorologist in the Promised Land
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The thorn in turn became the means to lift the leaves off of the ground.

—Andy Goldsworthy
For my mother, Nancy McKay,
and for Fran and Marv Tepper
BIRDS IN APRIL
Birds in April

Except for the imperative *wait here*

and what rises to the interrogative,

*now? when?* the tongues I’ve learned don’t offer word-

for-word translation. They are glass, *aim and*

*fire* silvered backs scraped clean

of known intonations. *really?* Negotiation

leans a thin shoulder into patience. *repeat, please* Orders

and questions, briefest pleas—only these

surrender directly, prepared for grasping *give*

without mediation. *run* Departing,

the lover suddenly understands all

the world’s languages, *go* as though platoons

of dictionaries have stormed re-opened

recesses in his intellect. He leaves

anyway. *again?* What remains is

a space that can’t contain him, but which

he will not stop haunting. *hush* The killdeer
feigns a broken wing to draw thieves from the nest. 

How fierce was I supposed to be? Cardinals  
will battle their own reflections in spring.  

*how?*

*quick, come*  

No one is looking back at me.
T’philot (Prayers: Jerusalem, summer)

1. For Vesalius
Jerusalem is Rome
ecorché. Skinned city
teaching anatomy
in her eyeless tomb.
Peeled, the body reveals
nothing. Tendon
plucked from muscles,
muscles cleaved from bone.

2. For the Galilee
The Kinneret cannot roll
like her sister does. She sings
in fractured slate.
Haze of breath on a milky bowl.
The crab snaps before knowing
my hands are help,
bringing blood to the tip:
Bright drop. Lost meat.

3. For the Gatherers
Combing for membrane, marrow,
remaining tress
at rest in branch and asphalt.
No pieces too small to bless,
to gather and bury.
4. *For Fish*

I loved the smoke-headed birds
hiding gold under tails. Seal-slick,
the boy took my breast
in his mouth. *Do you love it,*
he asked. Hebrew
has no word for like.
The fish persist, unceasing
and unconcerned, an academy of light.
*Give me your hand,* he said.
Even a smile is a catch
in the flesh. Eye contact is more
water, more light.
Statistics

More good than bad. More blue than black.
More birds than bones. More time than home.
More dogs than horses. More breath than tongue.
More teeth than trees. More blood than wings.
More ears. More fingers. More blood
than anything. Less pain than blood.
Less weight than snow. Less silver.
Less care than silence. Less strange
than love. Less love than always.
Less dying than swimming.
More waiting than running.
Less willing than talking.
More eating than asking.
Less drinking than singing.
More burning. Less missing than gone.
After the Tombs (Tarquinia)

You are exhuming the distance that connects your eyes to a lined sheet of paper. All the symbols of abundance are displayed,

but dry to the touch. You might answer the door somewhere between the third and seventh knock, like a bird stopping to bathe in the dust.

Not everyone succumbs to imagination. When you do, the apricot tree lets down a single branch distended with fruit.

Nothing else is liquid for miles. The grit climbing the staircase of your legs tastes of rice and honey. Only your shoulders think to seek shelter from the oncoming weather. What good does it do to wait in stillness, the way glass waits for disaster?
You Are Not Here

Imperative: second person, future.

(Listen, sweet. Listen. = You will listen. You will.)

*

For my student I write LEAVE LOVE LAUGH. Not to teach chronology but sound, then tense: I (will) leave. You (will) laugh.

*

She left him, I say. You love him, he says. Repeats. New noise is another thorn in the throat. (Laughter.)

*

Today’s lesson: Voices that vibrate above the jaw, that marry tooth to lip. Like feathers, or their opposite.

*

(You are here. You want to be here.)

*

The role of the verb “to be” always comes loose in the present tense. In the desert, it dries up. Flies away.

*

See you you will see you will see you soon—