

For this brief time, I will lend you
My ears. I offer the most
competitive rates, and, besides, I
almost never ask for them back.
I have always been pneumatic,
Defined by what can fill me. I will never
Say a single word that you don't want
To hear. I will never say anything, just in case.
Why waste my breath? I am a bird's bone.

We will teach ourselves to fly.
If we learn to breathe together, maybe
It will sound like flying. But the sound
Is not the thing here. We are all stuck hearing
Speaking, tongue and teeth and spit
And lips and how the air is stopped and started.
How the tongue pounds on its roof for joy
At forming, making matter. Language is more
than how we speak it. Listen there.

What heavy history is held on the tongue tip.
Like birds our songs are taught to us
And we don't know their history. Who has
Mothered this bird's song? Let not this noise
Caress you. We must not add silence
To silence. The symptoms of their experiences
Do not ask for more. This is not a yawn.

I care! I care! I care! I scream
So loud and much I take up all the space
I left for caring. Sometimes the world is heavy
On my skin like rain, and sorrow-sodden.
I have been a thing of moonlight, quiet,
Reflecting light from some self-burning sun
Now I know I am my own slow greenhouse;
the world is hollow - I must fill it.

I have marvelled at the birds' song, searched
For space in their small bodies. How is their song
Now a privilege? How have we managed not
To listen? I was told the ancient greeks
Believed migrating birds turned into fish.
How can I begin to translate water?

The talks of birds and men are overlapping,
They all stand in their gardens, catching up.
A man is setting up a ladder, silent,

[*listen*]

You could imagine he is made of birds.
The bird/man drags his feet along the gravel

A car roars down the road, dark-smoking cat;
I try to cram this world in a recording
[*the birds still sing*] I shrink it almost flat.
The bird/man creaks and groans and sings and gardens;
We see his shape emerge through things he hits;
My bed is made of birds that barely hold me,
While I'm outside, among the feathered men.

There is a bird's nest in my back garden
And I have loved the pattern of it. Silence, mostly,
Before the mother lands a foot away
And then the silence rumbles. Then she flits up
To her children. And I love to hear the small eruption
Of hunger when the little ones know food's
In reach in a parent's beak. Fulfilment of desire.

I am shapeless waiting. I am nest, I am
Silhouette. I am very good at settling in
To the spaces I am given. Breathe in,
How it fills you. I have taken it for granted.
Now I know this air is golden. I have seen it
In the birds, and I love them, how they're full
Of it. May this emptiness also grant me flight.