

Clay into birds

by [Jeff Gundy](#) in the [June 16, 2021](#) issue

*for Obi Martin*

Mammoth mammon-caged gatherings  
are happening elsewhere. But we are here,  
where we can be counseled to lean toward  
whatsoever things are funny, small, astonishing,  
oblique. Once the alphabet was magic,  
once the leaves spoke a language  
the wise heard behind their eyes.

Once a strange hand fistled clay into birds,  
and images slipped from one mind to another  
like breath, like wind, like electrons  
slipping inside the airy hearts of protons  
and out again, shaking out their fur.

Once there was twice as much time,  
time enough for singing and hunting,  
time for the rough mysticism of  
a well-used broom, a pitchfork,  
and trysts in the secret grottos too.

And then there was nothing but rain,  
nothing but desire for a well-lit room  
and creatures resembling ourselves.

We can never hear what others mean,  
exactly, and yet we go on, daily  
launching sounds into the distances  
like spider silk, like swaying bridges,  
like the word that is always a gift,  
always magical yet not magic,  
patient as the foggy membranes

that will someday be a star.