

## DOVE EGG

*Jim Papworth—Department of English*

When I reach toward the nest—  
a moment of truth for us both—  
she lifts shyly and lights  
in a nearby cottonwood.  
Her egg fits my hand  
like a small, pink world.

I do not think of consequence  
or survival of the fittest,  
or that every time I hear dove song  
I will mourn and wait for penitence,  
looking toward the sound  
at the dove's black, forgiving eye.

It is one of those small, selfish acts  
only humans know. The dove will not  
account for the lost shape of her nest;  
nothing like a human mother's loss.

Afterward and for years  
I will want the moment back: time to stand still:  
my hand to retract closed and hollow at my side:  
walk back into the solitude of home.

## TO MY CHILDREN

*Jim Papworth—Department of English*

We must stop passing  
each other with our heads down,  
as if we were passing in cars,  
or on sidewalks in big cities.  
Let us admit light so hard  
it shakes and rumbles in our chests,  
makes us dance and jive  
to our home's sweet thrum.

Promise to look into each  
other's eyes, like friends  
we have known for years,  
like the dogs whose eyes wait  
outside our doors.  
Knock on each other's doors  
with good intentions  
or a cup of twice heated cocoa,  
the tea of peace.

All of us are wise enough  
to know improbabilities, to discard  
what should have been,  
to relax our grip on the past.  
Today, children,  
when we walk out of our rooms,  
let us shout or embrace  
so our home knows we are alive.

## POSTCARD

*Jim Papworth—Department of English*

In my hands it feels small and thin,  
almost like holding you.  
I swallow your words like a prodigal  
counting again the weeks you've been away.

The picture is Beatrix Potter's sitting room,  
her table rounded by three Victorian chairs,  
proper and high-backed, stiff, a bit frigid even;  
her walls hung with plates and art:

her things: conscious things: like you deciding  
which card and when, which sweet murmurings,  
how to bend closer to paradise;  
the intricate measurings of love.

I too decide, thinking that fine place  
between sentiment and sentimentality.  
I fill the miles with memory—  
the way you correct hair that falls

into your forehead; the way your hand  
comes toward me like a scared child,  
but warm, our skin remembering;  
an afternoon when we watched blackbirds

dance and weave in the cattails,  
the sadness of their wavering chorus,  
the small gift of their yellow heads,  
the intricacies of their community.

Mired in this dull ache  
I think how simple separation seems,  
how many times I've leaned toward you  
like Donne's compass seeking a circle.

And how in the airport a few days from now  
we will move toward each other  
in the sweet dance of clumsiness—  
those first moments back together.

ABOVE HENRY'S LAKE: MID NOVEMBER

*Jim Papworth—Department of English*

As if the bird-god knew a sign would remind me of belief—  
he sent an omen—not an eagle with a white goose  
hooked and bleeding in its talons—  
but a neighborhood of Waxwings.

They did not swoop down in a clap of thunder,  
or materialize in the shattered edge of lightning:  
they appeared from nowhere: a vision, an incantation  
of fifty or sixty small fawned bodies

rising and falling in unison like a startled gasp,  
or a balloon let loose of air, a shook carpet, a puff of dust,  
like a giant heart *whuwumping*, each combined undulation,  
each acrobatic somersault a new metaphor.

A picture show from the early days—no sound  
but the whirl of wings, a small, careful practice  
of group flight aerodynamics, of a god dipping  
those sixty tails in yellow paint, just so. A brush stroke

on the sky's blue canvas; a small play of ballerinas—  
on a moment landing in Junipers, then off  
like startled minnows. No sound but the sound  
of synesthesia, of swirl and swing, of life lived high and fast.

No sound. But the bird-god conducted  
each movement and his wand sprayed the birds  
in a different pattern of choked spasms, of pulsation,  
lifting and rising a *passi lenti* in the breath-held show

of blue and snow and Juniper, a small moment of watching  
without effort, a brief mood of intense happiness,  
a gift I keep opening and opening—  
the unwrapping a rhythm like circadia.