

JACKSON WILLS

FROM *INTER UMBRAS ARBORUM*,  
A PASTORAL PHANTASM-AGORIA

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Spring is the anatomy of light:  
the body of the sun widely split  
into the camellia's foliate slits,  
when it gives too much, reflecting white;

given in lobes to the ripples  
in pools cold makes shadowed and clear,  
and settling like a sediment's veneer  
in the green growth below the puddle;

the body of light curving in bent nickels  
on oak leaves, coins of its divide  
speckling the lawn with light. It's implied:  
a bright day is the sun's burial.

That communion that tastes of light  
let me walk in it one Saturday,  
and let the pieces of the earth say  
the nature of death spoken in light.

I wear my nerves like a necklace,  
and don't even understand their path,  
just lay back to be some wire's swath,  
allow the tingle of their talking's lace.

I am a radio made of plants,  
the songs I play on my green lobes  
all understand the wires of their birth; green globes  
fructify with melody the magnets inside understand.

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THE IOWA REVIEW

Whether my throat is angry like wool,  
or compliant and slick like a stream,  
determines the color of the electric steam  
that trails from and composes me, a spool:

sometimes phlegmy yellow and crackling;  
a liquid blue with bellies of green  
when I am right; crisp pink when I am mean:  
my mood spools out in gaseous string.

That day I spooled a cerulean stun,  
the blue of a bruise in Caribbean water,  
speckled with green in lobes and filters,  
and other brilliant coffins for the sun.

These yarns of smoke engendered  
and contained a Nightingale and Three Jabirus;  
their substance at first a feathery cirrus,  
a moment left them more solidly tendered.

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I wired and steamed everywhere around,  
and in the dirt I made a mirror  
by pure force of permeation and odor,  
and became a phrase of the ground.

The birds, all brindled like oil slicks,  
flecked with ambiguous gristle,  
and with a nerve's invisible glisten,  
were man-sized, and crusted with black.

The Nightingale had a baby's face,  
and all the Jabirus had the face of a fetus;  
they ate the grass like anorexic lettuce,  
and left it in their teeth like green lace.

Obviously, then I followed them—  
their fetal cheeks began to spasm  
with the force of their nature and phantasm;  
what they said was their froth's skim—

Said the Jabirus,

“We are bound to each other by a mirror:  
he flattens us three into his one image.”  
“They are a prism that splits my pure plumage  
into its constituent speckled odors,”

said the Nightingale.

“Here's a natural history of the soul,  
which comes in seven jig-sawed parts,  
and comes apart in several animals,  
each one with a new-colored, raw-colored heart.”