

JENNIFER MOXLEY

THERE IS A BIRDSONG AT THE ROOT OF POETRY*

for Ann Lauterbach

Hemmed in by an un-
tenable image

feathers planted
below fragile branches

of avian fee scaly crossroads scoring

138

a particular blue of sky

offending

through the uselessness of misplaced

forms thorny prongs

that make no sense (and yet belong)

on the ground

out of which

the bird wings stiffly jut

rigid as

rhubarb leaf

rising from out the muffled beak

site of a perverse smothering
throated core submerged Should you
kneel the body's aged mechanism
beneath the shade of dry feathers Should you
place the vulnerable cavern
of ear—trembling passage to psyche's
failures our fall
into suffering knowledge— Should you
listen *you will* hear
the wasted strains of an underground song
deadened by thoughtless depths
but alive
for the dead have kept it
safe from false music
a ghoulish guard of LOVE SAFE from
she who bullied by the cruelty of others
the false sophistication of fashionable libraries
the envy of those

who would molest the world into false confessions
and banish all mystery
 with their dripping
candles who would
unearth the birdsong to cage it
she who will end by destroying what she loves most

Shhhh, quiet

140

listen

it is drawn by other amblers
 its strains awake in our attentions
as a sudden bewildering happiness
 ear wedded to earth, *Listen*
and hear
 what those who know all
can not

**Robert Duncan, letter to Denise Levertov, August 22, 1962*