WHO NOTICED SUCH THINGS

Padraig O Broin

He could have fingered each blade of new green
that first week out. Tulips foreshadowed glory
he might have named, but wouldn’t. And forsythia,
japonica, lilac.

The birds convened. Robin
made his lawn a tilt-yard; grackle strutted
arrogant of yellow eye while cracking
doled-out corn. Impudent jay, cardinal
calling “girlie-girlie”, and oriole fluted
while, hung on invisible air, a ruby-throat
performed—living flames that blazed out of sky
itself part of that unnamed glory.

Summer
was warm and winds blew gently. When it rained
it picked the night to do it. Lying awake
he heard it tap on roof and pane; knew water
bringing life to earth—knew morning sun
draw up clouds’ gift till they, gathered again
on evening’s edge, returned the rain to earth.

It tired his head to think that cycle through.

All summer long he looked and named; touched,
but never plucked, that baby coon he could
have tamed but wouldn’t.

Autumn grew into glory’s
self that year. They took him driving over
his winding northern roads where curve on curve
paraded colour from green through golden brown
to gold to crimson to flame that dazzled eye
and mind at once till where the glory lived
—around above or in his head itself—
mind couldn’t wrestle with any longer. He
was tired.
That last night he went outside
to watch the stars. A clean clear night.
Air nipped. Past full, October's moon
late to rise but stars held enough of glory.

And thin, high, disquietingly sweet
he heard them going over, migrating birds
whose calls he couldn't put a name to, though could have
once; impersonal birds that brought the spring,
now going away.

To come again, though.

"The birds are flying south" he said, and knew
the year the doctors gave him over now.

"He must have got a chill that night" the daughter
said. They all agreed.

The trees stood
naked in day's grey chill.

And after
they were home again, and warmed, the snow
came, covering over earth that spades
had rearranged that morning.