

Redbird

Larry McLeod

In the cold gray heart of winter
In December, January, February
It doesn't matter, just the emptiest of days
For me today
When the bright cock redbird
Sat swaying in the windblown bush
At the corner of the house

All there is to know
Is a living color
Against the drab bush
Of winter's heart
The reddest of reds, the sharp black face
A sudden flame
Thrust into the empty limbs
Small consolation, but real enough
An undeniable red

The many brown sparrows
Flitter and flutter
Small nothings
We barely notice
Blackbirds in their sweeping swirling pilgrimage
Blacken the green rye field, fill
A pecan tree, half the sky
Pale-breasted robins hop upon the lawn
The singular redbird
Holds on against the wind
Hard weather

The larger heart
The silent brooding self
Will not ever speak
Except through a cold wind
Tossing a redbird
We should never have thought
There would be voices
Only the redbird's coming
Bright red and real
Into a winter heart
Filled with blood and prayers.