

Peter Cooley

The Sparrows

By the time it comes to me
I will have ceased speaking
even to myself, the woman thinks.
On the window evening deepens
beyond her yard, and at the river
the willows, in the shallows waist-high,
already lie down with the first dark.

Her cold palms lift her breasts
and lighter they slip from her.
At her belly the fingers web
over this child, unmoving now
she will surrender tomorrow, still.

Yet how this first appeared,
the river at the verge of night,
the acanthus and jasmine little flames
the pane divided up, she cannot put away.
How shadows parted and the grass
flickered to lay down stem and root
that first instant, quickening.
And, the next second, how light fell
on the sparrows she had not seen before.
How, without echo, their screams arose
before them, and the shrub gave up
blossom to seed that they might sing,
each bearing upward before it
the token moment of its survival.