

Joseph Chaney

The Escapees

Often in the twilight motley flocks
of parrots tumble through the low air,
reeling in one mass screeching like a
rusted cart wheel on a rusted axle.

For several weeks before I knew
its cause, the grating tumult
drew me to the window to search
our cul-de-sac. No one appeared.

And I recalled Firenze's narrow street —
the leather goods carts proceeding at dawn
on uncoiled metal wheels, assaulting sleep
and shattering my tourist's placidity.

So when my Santa Ana neighbors told me
look up, and I saw the parrots, I stood
silenced within myself, watching
them skim the rooftops going.

No longer do they mimic speaking
or, clowning, hang upside down
from their caged perches, exotic
flatterers of the family room.

Escaped pets whose conspiratorial calls
worked their magic for the species,
they settle in the evenings, stoop-shouldered
side by side along power lines,

nameless now, unrecognizable, denying
everything. Count them, call them
what you want. They aren't for sale.
Never was their noise so unlike singing.