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# What Are Birds Worth

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## VENI VIDI PICCOLOMINI

I dreamt of rain: puffballs coming up  
along a log, a long-haired dog  
limping away from a mystery. Aeneas

Piccolomini, I picked you out  
of pine needles and the 15th century;  
you wondered how a pear-bush got in  
among the evergreen, why you came

to Scotland in the first place.  
What sounds my pipes made  
when you danced around the pears  
that were ripe and in the shape of geese.

When they fell off from the fury  
of your ecstasy, they saw a dog wander  
back to its sheep, and flew away.

## WHAT ARE BIRDS WORTH

*for L.D.*

Be a sea gull. Drop upon the beach.  
Be a legal tablet or a peach come to rest  
upon the nose or feet  
of our local Hammurabies.

Birdies, beat the plums from our formal orchards,  
sing through the membrane  
of what holds us back: what's behind

the banister? A barrister? A courtly blister  
itching for a pin? Will it open? O,  
when the saps from the phloem and the xylem  
and the birds (what words birds are)  
drop upon the beach.