

MARTHA RONK

The blackbird whistling or just after

silence won

is made possible when

just after,

standing in front of the Dufy palm the lavender floor tilting

legs crossing over the legs of garden chairs in imitation

breath held

it comes as skin sliding into place, the place

of excavating hours,

and finally all the unseen, unheard stuff of what one is not

The blackbird whistling or just after

space opens, not vertiginously

but settled, four-square

as lying flat on the ground

tricks us out of logic

a smudged lilac gives out life as hypothesis

as in the painting of his studio, Matisse's

canvases stacked,

after acting as possibility—scaffolding extended and holding

the prepared and unpainted in full view

The blackbird whistling or just after

or serving as semicolon,
alternating sound and silence in a flicker

back and forth as language allows—form
and scatter, dry and river-washed

for who knows what's coming or to come
differences vying for clarity

a sound minus undertones or overtaken
by the perennial crashing of waves on the shore

yet the bird so solidly shaped in outline
its whistle weighting the Apollonian

of absolute insistence
before the balance tips

The blackbird whistling or just after

it's iconic as the shape of bird carved
or sketched in pencil, order imposed:

hollow circle put in for eye and its linear profile
circle for head, triangle for beak

a simple depiction of the thing itself

if we light a match in the forest it's not to see
but to uncover how much more darkness is around

what we can't know looming behind trees
behind their skeletal certainty

a leg giving way without warning
the endless fall from one step to the next

The blackbird whistling or just after

the silence after isn't the same as the silence before,
it's circumscribed by the remnants of sound

tactile as fingernails, a contoured attentiveness

left-over notes shaped like water forms
gullies in the sand

the soundless rasp of crayon on paper

wax suspended on the roughened surface

words sounding almost alike

nothing infused with something