

## Voices from Afield

Smith College Renga #1

with stanzas from Matt Donovan, Clare O'Gara, Rosetta Cohen, Ira Goga, Floyd Cheung, Arda Collins, Sean Joyce-Farley, Jen Blackburn, Alex Dawn, Bill Hagen, Maggie Olszewski, and Ellen Doré Watson

More news scrolling, yet more FaceTime,  
mugs of ginger tea & the slow, dizzying work  
of spring snow erasing the daffodil stems.

Sailboats on the Willamette River only touch  
accidentally. We are suddenly similar to them,

moving stiffly across aisles and sidewalks, oar-arms  
straight at our sides. Today, a somber hawk, perched low  
on a stripped birch branch, watched us walk

with gold and burning eyes, but no sun to be seen.  
Each day like a grey coat I take on and off

cocoons my grief and yet cracks open each night  
with virtual choirs, phone calls, and time to read

the light in the trees across the afternoon  
on the small hill tomorrow. What wouldn't  
be still spirals into the invisible

eddies spun by the dog's lapping tongue  
in the water dish. Who wouldn't be

jealous of two birds  
perching (not even) one wing's  
full distance apart?

I watch them from my shattered glass window,  
longing to escape my existence.

Clouds drift in a sunless sky,  
the sweet scent of earth washes  
memory from my mind.

Birds fly by in the shape  
of a hand. All I remember is missing this.

Come here, little sinking heart. Yes, I used that word.  
Look, the finches have turned from olive-drab  
to lemon-yellow overnight. This is not nothing.