

December Morning in the Desert

by Alberto Ríos

The morning is clouded and the birds are hunched,
More cold than hungry, more numb than loud,
This crisp, Arizona shore, where desert meets
The coming edge of the winter world.
It is a cold news in stark announcement,
The myriad stars making bright the black,
As if the sky itself had been snowed upon.
But the stars—all those stars,
Where does the sure noise of their hard work go?
These plugs sparking the motor of an otherwise quiet sky,
Their flickering work everywhere in a white vastness:
We should hear the stars as a great roar
Gathered from the moving of their billion parts, this great
Hot rod skid of the Milky Way across the asphalt night,
The assembled, moving glints and far-floating embers
Risen from the hearth-fires of so many other worlds.
Where does the noise of it all go
If not into the ears, then hearts of the birds all around us,
Their hearts beating so fast and their equally fast
Wings and high songs,
And the bees, too, with their lumbering hum,
And the wasps and moths, the bats, the dragonflies—
None of them sure if any of this is going to work,
This universe—we humans oblivious,
Drinking coffee, not quite awake, calm and moving
Into the slippers of our Monday mornings,
Shivering because, we think,
It's a little cold out there.