



Sparrow Tree

Gwyneth Lewis

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?Roland Mathias Poetry Award (Wales Book of the Year) Gwyneth Lewis's highly inventive Sparrow Tree puts nature writing in a spin, presenting a huge variety of birds, both British and American: blue tits, blackbirds, egrets, juncos, starlings, herons and humming-birds as well as the sparrows of the title. The book explores birds as mouthpieces for inhuman song and the wild inside the mind. Launching flights of avian fancy or fantasy on several levels, Sparrow Tree moves from birdsong as proto-language to birds as decorative beings. The collection includes her already well-known How to Knit a Poem, commissioned by BBC Radio 4, and ends with images of the human word as a form of love. 'These are poems that gather darkly and peck. They feint and play hazardously with their beaks and sometimes take to wing... These are poems more concerned with the mechanisms of song – both human and avian – than they are with the song itself, and it is this resistance that makes the poems so often mesmerising... What Lewis pulls off...feels like an avian feat: she strikes a ?ne, improbable balance between gravity and levity. Even as her speaker struggles to access the language, to get the voice right, she gets us off the ground and ungiddily bids us, look' – Elyse Fenton, New Welsh Review.

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