

DONALD WHEELOCK

Closer to Myth

Let's have something closer to a myth—
an animal—a *bird* that with its beak
whispers in your ear before your death.
It tells you what it knows about the bleak,

brief coda to your consciousness, before
the last familiar face retreats and calls
your name a last time from the door.
This hour is the time when time stalls.

You lie there like a stone. They think you're dead.
You are, to them. But you hear all they say,
even all the words they think you said.
And yet you'd have your life end just this way.

It's peaceful now, without the strength to move,
to talk, to touch, with hearing still intact.
It leaves you free to—is that feeling *love?*—
without the constant need to interact.

“I am alive,” you want to say. “You’ll be—
if I may be so bold—in this place too.”
Yet how to tell you what that bird taught me,
that led me to the peace I’d grant for you?