

By W. S. Di Piero

Trying to find my roost  
one lidded, late afternoon,  
the consolation of color  
worked up like neediness,  
like craving chocolate,  
I'm at Art Institute favorites:  
Velasquez's "Servant,"  
her bashful attention fixed  
to place things just right,  
Beckmann's "Self-Portrait,"  
whose fishy fingers seem  
never to do a day's work,  
the great stone lions outside  
monumentally pissed  
by jumbo wreaths and ribbons  
municipal good cheer  
yoked around their heads.  
Mealy mist. Furred air.  
I walk north across  
the river, Christmas lights  
crushed on skyscraper glass,  
bling stringing Michigan Ave.,  
sunlight's last-gasp sighing  
through the artless fog.  
Vague fatigued promise hangs  
in the low darkened sky  
when bunched scrawny starlings  
rattle up from trees,  
switchback and snag  
like tossed rags dressing  
the bare wintering branches,  
black-on-black shining,  
and I'm in a moment  
more like a fore-moment:  
from the sidewalk, watching them  
poised without purpose,  
I feel lifted inside the common  
hazards and orders of things  
when from their stillness,  
the formal, aimless, not-waiting birds  
erupt again, clap, elated weather-  
making wing-clouds changing,  
smithereened back and forth,  
now already gone to follow  
the river's running course.

Source: *Poetry* (May 2009)

