



Lyrebird

Meredith Clark

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In her lyric memoir *Lyrebird*, Meredith Clark moves between poetry, metanarratives, and vignettes. Motivated by loss, she tries to accrue images and memories of a child yet unborn—perhaps to lure it into being, or to process her loss. Haunting images build as the relationship that created the lost child morphs and changes into something that Clark struggles to understand.

Beginning with the loss of the desired child, the book says “Here, we will match you to a body, and the trick will be remembering that this body is housing only.” It remembers the spirit even as the spirit is denied a body. Clark chooses to invite the spirit into her mind instead, to talk to it and record what she sees and feels. This serves many purposes: for the spirit, the poet creates, the mother longs and lures, and the woman records her relationship for posterity.

The book chronicles joy in nature just as it chronicles doubt in relationships and a partner’s inability to articulate emotion. Articulation is Clark’s forte, and thus her wordless partner baffles and angers her. Her tone is meditative, wondering how to love something, or someone, without understanding one’s beloved.

Short, declarative sentences—sometimes just phrases—are spoken in direct addresses to the waiting spirit. Because the spirit is the audience, the book assumes both interest and unconditional love; thus its lines carry inherent vulnerability. The lyrebird, which can replicate all the sounds that it hears, further defines the book’s mission, wherein “journaling” for the would-be child means recording everything, not knowing what the revelatory moment might be.

Lyrebird is Meredith Clark’s memoir about processing—with her partner, in her writing, and through her spirit child—the loss of a child and an anticipated future.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (November / December 2020)

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