

Aubade: Tyrantsong

All week each morning in plain sight outside my window
as Venus fades into the light, an olive drab bird
repeats and repeats his sliding scale in minor key,
his descent a pure measure of aching heart.

Tyrannidae, says my guide, *Kingbirds*.
From the Greek Because they sit upright
in prominent places, defend their space and catch
their prey on the wing. The melancholy
song of the male at dawn is specific.

Wrong from the start: too big a name for a bird so small,
too self-pitying a tune for a tyrant's song,
and that at this late stage of empire when even
the tyranny of love has an antiquated ring
that brings a smile to knowing lips. Nonetheless,

I've learned to imitate his call — not, of course,
in expectation that you will show up in a flutter of wings,
tail in full display, let alone bringing
the more discrete gifts ladies are said once to have given
singers compelled to blue notes by a green season,
but just because whistling does help to lighten things up.