

Cardinal Points

Daybreak in early April,
still a nip in the air.
Making my morning libation,
I heard three birds
at three distinct locations
one after another
calling the same call.

Only one in sight:
to the south, a rose-red
Pyrrhuloxia
perched on a tall mesquite,
the sun's incandescence
a blaze on his breast.

A hundred yards or so west,
another whistled the phrase
in what to my ear
seemed identical
in pitch, timbre, tempo
and scale. To the east
a like distance a third
equally emphatic
rehearsed the eight notes.

Listening to them,
wondering since the season
was abnormally cool
if their singing was
still meant to attract
or simply territorial,
I asked myself why
only three, why none
to the north where I
would have heard even though
it occurred to me then
the back of my head was gone
while those three called
attention to one another.