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Two Poems by Lesley Wheeler



We Could Be Cyborgs

Since the doctor carved his eyeball and
inserted a toric lens, his glance glitters
differently. Pale as winter or a bank
of chill machines. Since her throat constricted,
she lies wakeful, tuned to the bloody clash
of prednisone jitters and strong-armed melatonin,
reminded of the Tasman and Pacific
straining at each other's seam. Natural,

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at this age, to decay and disjoint—to seek
chemical solder and replacement parts.
The genre has changed from romance to science
fiction, with change itself the charismatic
star. Cyborgs like quiet, but that's obsolete.
This is love to the limits, at flickering speed.



Acoustic Niche

The cardinal out on a limb sings boundary lines:
what-what-what-what it's my tree-my tree-my tree.
Red map in the readable air.

The person is in the place, but place is also
in the person. Teeth, bones, after a bit. We are
landscape. But what kind of space is this,

words typed, woods reimagined? The juvenile
passerine begins with “sub-song,”
like a human baby’s babble;

the next stage, when the fledgling

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means to talk to you, is “plastic song,”
lacking the stereotypy of adult music,

but homing in. Takes mirror neurons,
a few months imitating tutors, for isolate
song is unintelligible to conspecific birds

defending their maples. This letter can be
a less lovely tree, arms stretched up, yellowy-
green flowers sifting down, circled

by interpreters and squirrels. Someone
lived here once. You can visit, ear to grooved
bark, and listen to what she recorded,

the *chip-chip-chipping*. If you call that singing.

Art Information

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Lesley Wheeler's fourth poetry collection, *Radioland*, was published by Barrow Street in 2015. Her previous books include *The Receptionist and Other Tales*, a James Tiptree Award Honor Book; *Heterotopia*, winner of the Barrow Street Press Poetry Prize; and *Heathen*, from C&R Press. Wheeler's recent poems and essays appear in *Ecotone*, *Crazyhorse*, and *Tahoma Literary Review*; she writes micro-reviews for the *Kenyon Review Online*. An English professor at Washington and Lee University, Wheeler resides in Lexington, Virginia, and blogs about poetry.

For more information, visit [Lesley Wheeler's website](https://lesleywheeler.org) [4].

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