The woman with no feet sits on the porch. Before her, on the new-mown lawn, her son polishes his motorcycle until its chrome facets gleam under the sun, display a world playing on surfaces, things shining along and across, their parameters warped, motions churning and strange. The tall trees fringe space, fringe the blue with its frills of white mist, its patched lace. The old woman watches over the humming engine while her son revs it up, dark roar in our ears full of wind. The space around shapes is of interest, the space between leaves imprecise, planes of pale air notched by the green, a geometry raised, what might be an angle interrupted by branches grown past plain. The woman’s legs jut out: one longer, cut off below the knee, the other lost mid-thigh. And above, the air writhes with birds, the sky’s alive with flying into, flying through. Robins, dark robins, and sparrows, like strong priests, loop together the light between edges, gathering sense, making of the jaggedness something defined only by feeling. Or the crowd of the self’s lifting off, carrying an image it believes is immense. Now the woman with feet made of air, with no speech, is being helped out of a car.
(When did she disappear?)
“Lean forward. Lean forward,” the son orders.
(I was watching the birds.)
“Push yourself out! Push yourself out!”
And the world above words, the real sky trailed by robins, by two crows and by fat pigeons scuttling the attic, feathering the heart's box.
One particular tree across the street from the woman with no feet stands in front of me. In the tree's knotted limb is a hole, and in that waits an additional hunger deepening. Sparrows dart in and out of the hole in the limb where the restless chicks wait with black throats. The parents are solicitous, swooping down every few minutes. They will not stop so much emptiness, or the young naked song, song so sure of the spirit's primacy, of the terrible wish.
“Good job. That makes it easier on everyone.”
Now the brusque son has placed his mother in a wheelchair, pushed her back to the porch where she'll sit and observe the sun's anger increase, the mechanical fruit. And her feet made of air have flown off with my heart like the birds who are priests.
May we scatter in peace.