

The Evangelion of Melampus Comes to Dillon, SC
Daniel Nathan Terry

I dug into the January dirt, bareknuckle—no time
for tools—my nails had to do for the cold, black
loam of the riverside. I'm no good

with secrets so I prayed the silt and sand and clay
could keep this underground; I whispered
I love another boy into the void I'd made

in the earth and buried it before it could bloom
into a joy that could've gotten me killed
in that town of confederates and saints. And so

the winter passed in safe silence. I should've known
the roots of spring would leech it from the soil
and the river's green reeds would rustle and grow

and blow the whisper to the mockingbirds that lit
upon them before flying on to sing my secret
in every backyard lawn—as if it were their only song.

Even then, I might've been spared—for what man
knows the languages of birds other than Melampus,
and he, a prophet of the Greece that held love

like mine in high esteem, would surely never tell.
But then came the threatening calls in the night,
the burning cross on the front lawn, the beatings

I took. When he told everyone who'd listen,
I'd like to believe he was preaching a new gospel—
one that embraced boys like me. So pure

it seemed to him: born immaculate from the throats
of birds, sweeter than the notes Apollo played
(my secret the music of the old gods made manifest

to the one evangelist who could sing it in a sermon
my friends and neighbors could not fail to bear
witness to) but refused to homilize.