Ascension

David Schelhaas

Dordt University

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A Golden Shovel is a poetic form devised by Terrence Hayes in homage to the African American poet Gwendolyn Brooks, long time poet laureate of Chicago. It is a poem in which the poet takes a line from another poet’s poem (or the entire poem if it is short) and creates a new poem. In the poems below, retired Dordt professor David Schelhaas takes the words of the poem “Bee Still” by his son Luke (written in 1994 when he was a Dordt student), and creates a new poem by using them as the end words of each line of his poem “Ascension.” So, you can read Luke’s poem by reading the end words of each line of Dave’s poem.

bee still

Luke Schelhaas

motionless
when he flies
he is
still
in the air
pure wing power
he flies a million miles an hour
and does not move closer to or farther from a flower
Ascension

Dave Schelhaas

Heads tipped back, motionless, they had not quite believed him when he said he was going home. A sparrow flies beneath his disappearing form and he is gone, yet is still present not in flesh but in their minds, in the words he spoke, like poems that hung in the air.

Something about him so pure he could ride his whole life on a wing and a prayer. Yet he held his power lightly in his hands, he opens them, and out flies one sparrow or a million, he knows them all. Miles are mini-seconds to him, an hour or a thousand years as a day and one day as a thousand. Does not it seem most natural that he would move back to his first home, closer to his source, closer to his father, or farther from us but still close enough to live in our hearts, a mystery that if we stay alert blossoms into a flower.