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Ascension

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Golden Shovel Poems

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.