

Meaning  
by Sophie Katz

There's a poem on the screen, a Dickinson draft  
about birds that have flown far away.

My professor, the scholar, is reading aloud,  
reciting that stanza she wrote long ago  
in his silvery sotto voce.

Then he stumbles backwards, hands flat on his desk—  
“What is that?! Isn't that cool?! What's it mean?!”

Is he asking? He's *asking*. He's looking to *us*,  
this scholar who's read it a million times,  
still brimming with wonder, still beaming with joy,  
is looking to *us* for our thoughts.

I lift up my hand. “It's her friends, I think,  
The bird is her friends, who would not write her back,  
but she's happy regardless; she has faith they'll return.”

His grin grows ever wider: “I hadn't thought of that!”

Now I'm brimming with wonder, I'm beaming with joy—  
for this poem from *then*, it means something new *now*,  
and it's me—oh, it's me!—who has said it.