G.C. Waldrep—on “Forecast” & “A New Ark” 4/3/25

“Forecast” and “A New Ark” are from a sequence of poems, *Winter Constellation,* drafted across the winter of 2022-23, that should be forthcoming from Tupelo Press circa 2028. It was a mysterious season for me, although some of my preoccupations—for instance, what is mercy, what does mercy look like, smell like, taste like—are evident.

Because we use so many words—“mercy,” “justice,” “grace”—without really knowing them in any intimate way. And I wanted to know them in an intimate way. Or be known by them, which is not the same thing, and yet it comes out, perhaps, at the same place, the same clearing in the forest where choice is possible—informed choice, consensual choice.

Ultimately I’m not sure we can comprehend these words in any root sense. But I think we can write towards them, or away from them, perhaps even inside them. We are never more than guests with them.

In the meantime we have to live somewhere, somehow. And that brings us to the ark: an exile that was also a dwelling. The condition of exile never really ends; one never really comes to rest again (even Noah’s ark, aground in the mountains of Ararat, remained an ark, incongruously perched). The days come and go, and the nights: *dwelling,* but not necessarily belonging, or continuing to belong in and to a place one no longer has access to, literally or figuratively.

So it turns out “exile” is another of these words, like “justice” or “longing.” It can’t be defined, but it can be participated in. Sometimes another word for this is “faith.” And sometimes not.