

The Moon Cracks Open

A Field Guide to the Birds

and Other Poems by
Marc Beaudin

“... When I breathe with the birds,
The spirit of wrath becomes the spirit of blessing,
And the dead begin from their dark to sing in my sleep.”
—Theodore Roethke

Heal the Earth Press

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For more on the writings and theatre work of Marc Beaudin, visit: www.CrowVoice.com.

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Birds of Paradise Valley, MT
for Kellie

They have all grown quiet
in cottonwoods and spruces
and I know I'm risking much
to watch this sunset alone.

I know it's only a matter of time
before I bring you here.

I spent 33 hours on a train
to get you out of my blood
only to find you waiting
in the first dream I've remembered
in months.

"This is how good it will be,"
the Dream-You says,
"when I finally fall in love with you."

And it's this Dream-You
that I seat beside me
on this porch
to watch the sinking gold
pull pinks and purples
from mountain-scraping clouds.

I hold your Dream-Hand to my chest
wondering if you can feel
the gun-shy bird
that lives inside.

Eventually the light is gone;
the mountains are dark, blue shapes
receding
And it's just an empty bottle
that I hold to my chest:
a hollow piece of glass that feels nothing.

—Deep Creek Bench, MT

Federico Garcia Lorca Reminds Me of Robert Frost

On a night like this
you can hear the ropes creaking
in their pulleys as the moon rises,
and the click and hiss
of each star coming on,
a hum of machinery sounding
almost like wind through the trees

When a coyote knifes the darkness,
you think of sirens.
When an owl echoes your question,
unseen,
you look for a door to lock,
a window to latch.
You pull your coat tighter
to your chest, and try
to remember that song from Sunday School;
but all that comes to your mouth
is the iron-salt taste
of your own blood.

It's then that you look down two roads
and wish you had paid more attention
to that poem
you had to read for class
years
and years
ago.

—Ewald's Bar, Saginaw, MI

Distillation

“ ... *the average size of all living things
is a housefly.*”

–Ivan T. Sanderson
How to Know the American Mammals

What freaks we must seem
so large and clamoring –
crushing whole worlds
with each grotesque step

If I could fold inward,
self upon self,
and shed everything superfluous

Like the ability to shoot a gun or
build a slaughterhouse or
pave a road or
turn on a television or
poison a river or
aim a missile or
plant a flag

I would be distilled to the essence
of what is vital and creative
in a human –
I would be condensed
to the size of a housefly

And on silvered, papery wings
would take flight,
and never look back.

–Green Point, Shiawassee Refuge, MI

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What is the soul
if not the sum of the flights
of a thousand birds?

Loon Point (*Gavia Immer*)

for Marv & Justine

Its red stone eye
holds within its gaze
the setting sun,
the last embers of a fire,
and all the blood racing through my veins

Surfacing suddenly
beside my canoe, the loon returns
with that terrible, transcendent eye
fixing me forever
in that moment in time

And then its voice:
the hurried laughter of one
driven mad by the incessant pounding
at the door of the world
by the inescapable nostalgia of lakewater

Its silhouette in flight
against the dawn-streaked air
is mimicked by the outline
of this lake's peninsula
giving it its new name, known

only to me, until now.
Now you too know the secret,
but you must promise
to keep it to yourself
to use only if you go there.

—Keypayshowink, MI

Mythology Timeline (*Cygnus Buccinator*)
for Doug and Andrea

Looking West
across the Yellowstone to the Gallatin Range
I know that at some point
stars end and porch lights begin
but it's impossible to say where

But over there, to the Absarokas
untouched by the frailty of outdoor lighting,
the stars are too numerous
to see as stars

Cygnus doesn't fly here,
across a dark sky,
rather he swims
through the luminous river
of the Milky Way

and I drink in the night
like a merlot
forgetting the cheap can of beer
in my idle, moon-painted
hand

I listen to crickets and coyotes,
straining
to make out the sound
of someone's name, but
I'm not sure whose,

wondering
if that swan is racing toward his love
or away from her.

—Deep Creek Bench, MT

Wild Geese

by Henry Colebank

Concerted scronks, much like harmonicas
a half-note out of tune, enticed my ear.
I eased my Cavalier off the road,
slid out, looked up like one who hears
a passage from a long forgotten song.
Almost directly overhead, north-bound,
a wedge of wild geese speared up the gray
November sky, while I, mouth agape,
stood staring up. Then suddenly it seemed
that discord sounded harmony and that
the very perturbation of the air
from beat of freeing wings pulled at my clothes
as if to loose confining bonds, and I,
though fettered to the earth, ran after them
until they disappeared beyond a screen
of trees. A pickup slowed and stopped. “Have you
lost something, friend?” the driver asked. “Oh yes!”
I sighed and nodded my head as to a child.

The Things We've Lost (*Branta Canadensis*)
for Henry Colebank

My geese were south-bound, Uncle,
but I stood hearing wings condense and release
the wintering air
my legs heavy with memory,
my steps frozen in the freshly dead weeds

They were voiceless, passing overhead,
carrying away all those things
we've lost
like your voice that I no longer can recall
(though it froze and burned me
when you read me your poems)

and what I said, after,
and what passed between then and
when I wrote three lines
at your funeral, wanting to slip
the scrap of paper into your coffin,
but didn't.

And more and more,
life seems to be a series of things lost;
like a leaking bucket that's carried
from a well up a long, meandering trail
till finally, we're home, with only a few drops
to sustain us.

But somehow, that's enough.

—Green Point, Shiawassee Refuge, MI