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Three Poems

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Rufous Hummingbird, Banff Park Museum

Torchbearer of airborne exuberance
epicure of crimson nectar
least likely of species
to be found, nesting, in a glass case.

Wings now colour, not motion
now feather, not air.
Now solid and as unlike yourself
as mist is unlike stone.

On your lichen-bound nest a single egg.

Decades ago someone held it,
drilled a hole at the equator
blew the half billion heartbeats
needed to unfurl continents
one after another, into air.

Leaving a cavern that cannot bear flight
a crypt for unborn journeys
a shell for the smallest of sorrows.

One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth: Variations on the Black-billed Magpie

I.

If no boundary divides sapphire from absence,
then the magpie.

If chinook winds tempt spring to flirt with dusk again and again,
each time curving more deeply into dark
then flight.

If a rainbow seeks not gold, but a soontobegone evanescent caress,
then the feathers of the magpie
thieve only the colours
this February afternoon
has forgotten.

II.

Iridescence stolen from Iris, messenger of rainbows.

III.

If I were to leave a chain of tarnished gold
hanging from my mailbox,
would you conspire to weave the day
with all that shimmers?

IV.

Accidental, but never the accident of belonging.
Your soft crash of appetite does not cease
to astonish.

Mated for life to the quotidian,
but always an epiphany on these streets.

V.

I wake to the staccato chatter
Noah banished to the roof of the ark.

Sapphire song stilled
to silhouette.

VI.

The suet cage in the apple tree
swings without
a single magpie.

Is your most auspicious omen
absence?

VII.

Within your fortress:

boughs of pine
and spruce,
a Starbucks cup,
hat band
of an abandoned
Stetson, five foil-wrapped
Easter eggs, mouthpiece of a trombone,
three red poker chips,
earbuds of an iPod, feathers
from an organza garter.

VIII.

How often have I awoken to wonder
whether footsteps ascending
from roof to branch to air
are those of dreams
or magpies?

IX.

Serrated wingtips graze the window.

A magpie
the afternoon in flight.

X.

From this city I have stolen:

September snowfalls, the steps of a man
who plays the harp at midnight,
busking by day for other dreams,
rumours from the tarsands, slow salsas
danced in circles on hardwood floors
below Stephen Avenue.

XI.

You gather in a murder, a gulp, a charm, a parliament,
but I've often seen you walk the streets alone.

If I were to alight on April in a skirt threaded with gold pendants,
would you walk beside me, hop becoming dance
becoming flight?

Take from me the part that misses rain,
feather me with prairie spring, the view from treetops,
a chance to play on the currents of the afternoon.

Pantoum for an October Evening

It begins with a slant of light. A spruce
silhouetted at the edge of evening—
the bounds from which it sets the twilight loose,
the breeze that rivers send. Freedom

often roams the banks of evening
she tells him, over promises and chai.
The shifting riverscent of freedom
won't abide a tentative goodbye.

She tells him, over promises and chai,
the wild geese of her youth would leave by day
would not wait for tentative goodbyes
would not dare to wager warmth for play.

The wild geese of her youth would leave by day
but now she hears them calling down the moon
hailing those who forfeit warmth for play
searching for the sun that left too soon.

They leave this city calling down the moon
for those awake enough to know its skin
searching for the day that left too soon
remembering the warmth of nights grown thin.

And those awake enough to know her skin
might hear her say the shadow of my wings is song
remembering the warmth of nights grown thin
abandoning a dream that stayed too long.

She might say, the shadow of my wings is song—
the bounds from which I set the twilight loose
abandoning a dream that stayed too long.
It begins with a slant of light. A spruce.

ANGELA WALDIE teaches at Mount Royal University in Calgary. She completed her PhD at the University of Calgary, where her research focused on species extinction in Canadian and American literature. She is currently writing her first poetry collection, entitled *A Single Syllable of Wild*.