

THE FESTIVAL REVIEW

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nonfiction • poetry • translation

THE FESTIVAL REVIEW

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Barricade

BY EMILY DOLAN

A blackbird built its nest on my tongue
chirps every time I bite wails every time I forget
its beak and feathers
the noise — sometimes my voice
 sometimes the blackbird
 sometimes neither of us but someone
 I would very much like to be someday
I'm sorry I'm rambling, blackbird is rambling,
I swallowed the nest but the wings keep beating against my teeth
wanting to be free but who am I without a blackbird in my mouth



Photo by fotografierende

from anesthesia

BY ALANI ROSA HICKS-BARTLETT

i.

i am angry with the woman
who first fed me. the fists of grass

and all of these stones you stack
like steeples. *worship what?* i have

this stomach full of worms and wounds and all of
these reeds someone once wove so lovingly,

so tenderly, are now winding themselves
tighter and tighter around my fists

to cuff a potential rebellion. or weigh
me down in the darkening waters.

iii.

when my mother died and the lost orbit
compressed and jarred all of my nerves,

like the explosion of an apocalyptic landscape
around the edge of earth and all the larger

suns in a fantasy film, i wondered
why this was the image that came floating

The Wild Swans at Camas

BY MATTHEW JAMES BABCOCK

Bright spikes of metal fringe the top
of informational panels
at the bird refuge where we escape
like water unchanneled.
Older children gone, the starved land burning,
and we keep returning.

To identify brings double pleasure:
Knowing the other
reveals your breed. The northern harrier
for the brooding mother,
the sleek, two-stepping tuxedoed coot
for the lover's recruit.

But the type of swan we learn days later
with more research —
no bulky mute, no statuesque trumpeter —
but the tundra, loral patch
of gold streaming like a war paint smear
or big yellow tear.

This natural delay against sureness,
this reciprocal force,
that festoons us in definite colors
and patterns at first
then next season in camouflage of white
is always right.

Two Poems from
The Woman in an
Imaginary Painting

BY TOM MONTAG

In the emptiness of
the museum at night

the woman in the painting
still sits in the light

coming through her
window. Our darkness

means nothing in that
other world. What she cups

now in the bowl of her
lap is an ecstasy

we cannot know. What
remains for tomorrow,

a remembrance of joy.

Four Poems

BY HENRI MESCHONNIC

Translated from the French by Gabriella Bedetti and Don Boes

lips are more the edge of all that will never
be said than the shore where we throw ourselves into
each other's words and for us these words begin in the margins
where the movements that join us are prepared before us
separate us with a tune which we cannot say
that we sing but the song is what sings us
and leaves us without a voice

from Nous le passage (We the Passage), Verdier, 1990

you must have some sun
in your blood some sun
in your hands to see the day
to be part of what
illuminates
living
on
the head of a pin
as in worlds

*from Je n'ai pas tout entendu (I Did Not Hear the Whole Story),
Dumerchez, 2000*

El Día de los Muertos — Then and Now

BY CATHERINE EVLESHIN

Their pickup trucks loaded with vats and food trays, the weathered faces peered from dented cars as they inched through a white-washed suburb of Phoenix on their way to the old cemetery.

Parents tending manicured lawns hurried their children inside and drew the drapes.

The descendants and loved ones of the entombed had spent the week weeding and scrubbing each family plot. This burial ground had been in the “Mexican American” part of town until gentrification forced out the original residents. More difficult to move the dead. So, each year the living have been allowed to return to commune with their ancestors in this resting place.

In 1990, I flew to Phoenix to attend the annual meeting of the Congress On Research in Dance. We ethnographers and anthropologists planned to spend the night at the cemetery, in the last decade before cell phone cameras might have interfered with the sacred intent of this day. A few other “tourists” straggled through during the night, but most of la gente in the cemetery were families who made the annual pilgrimage to honor the departed.

The sun slid behind the mountains, and bonfires flared at each family plot. Odor of simmering chocolate mole. Petals of orange and yellow cempasúchil (Mexican marigolds) dropped from callused fingers to

West, Over the Mountains

BY ANNA OBERG

Don't close your eyes. Don't you dare fall asleep. You need to see it all. These are my grandmother's instructions as she peers at me through the back window of my parents' blue Oldsmobile, waving goodbye from the driveway of her house on Avalon Road in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She stands in the sunshine, smiling, shifting her weight from one foot to the other on the cracked concrete slab. She is poised at the base of the brick stairs, ready to go back inside, out of the summer glare. Her hair, piled in immobile, silver curls, swirls around her head. Dad reverses and waves once more. I churn the window up, and we head west, over the mountains. For home.

I think this is where it begins, my obsession with the open road. I want to be obedient, to placate my grandmother, who undoubtedly offers these instructions to tease my parents — they wish for nothing more than peace on the five-hour drive. I want to report back all I've seen.

Thirty years have passed since then. Nolan and I are with our boys north of Fort Collins, Colorado, on US Route 287. The land is flat enough to see the weather. It is a big, big sky. To the west is happiness, and we are headed all the way to the coast. The smell of rain on red dirt comes through the air conditioning vents. We have been out for hours on the road watching the day descend.

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