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Imitation

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Imitation

Father carved birds
on the back step.
I often found him there,
painting plumage
with insistent accuracy.

From his spot
I threw my pet starling
in the air. Every day
he was at work
the baby bird flapped
a few inches higher,
fluff, wisps of
dandelion on the
breeze until
wind combed out
feathers and
it flew.

I called.

It ambled back

among the purple clover,

opened its

yellow clown beak

for a blender-chewed worm.

That day I would

not push the hand-mower,

again refuse to

behead buttercups.

I stood in the kitchen

by the back door

while father

read his nature

guide on the step,

mouthed names:

White-throat sparrow,

House finch, Mocking

bird.

On weekends after breakfast

Turd – *bird* shook his
shoe box, poked
beak through air holes
in the lid. Father hated
him airborne
in the house. I *did* wash
the blender clean,
churned foam worthy
of the Falls
while father's blade
whittled a starling
from a painting by Peterson.

Where was the verdigris
sheen of a head bobbing
after bugs? And the
flight feathers gilded by light?
The wood was too heavy
to ever fly.

I wandered alone
to the ravine, in search
of a bush fire
lit by the male cardinal
at dusk.

Back out at dawn
before father
came downstairs,
I watched
the sun free its red bird
from a tree.

KATE ROGERS' most recent poetry collection, *Foreign Skin* (Aeolus House), debuted in Toronto and Hong Kong in 2015. Her poetry has appeared in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Canada, the U.S., Malaysia, Japan and the UK in the following anthologies and literary magazines: *The Guardian*; *Contemporary Verse 2*; *Orbis International*; *Eastlit*; *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*; *Kyoto Journal*; *More!*; *Asia Literary Review*; *Seek It*; *Crave It* and *Many Mountains Moving*. Kate is co-editor of *OutLoud Too* (MCCM), the second anthology of OutLoud – Hong Kong's longest running English language poetry collective. She is also co-editor of the women's poetry anthology *Not A Muse: the inner lives of women* (Haven). *Not A Muse* launched at literary festivals in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia; Hong Kong and Toronto, and at the 2010 American Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Conference in Denver, Colorado.

Originally from Toronto, Kate Rogers lectures in Literature and Media Studies at the Community College of City University, Hong Kong. Kate is a member of the League of Canadian Poets.