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Maybe poets are dying | How did birds

Basma Kavanagh

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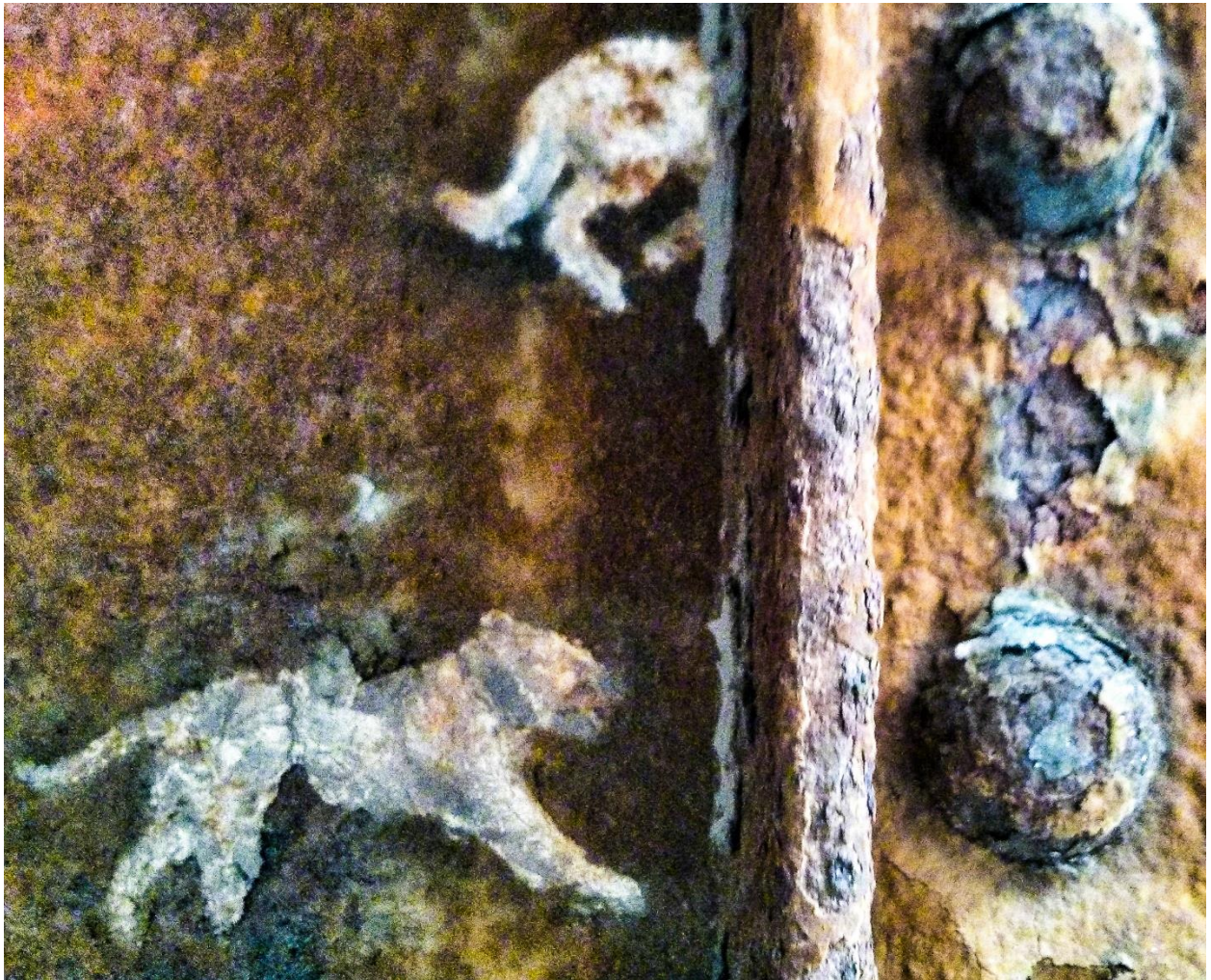
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Basma Kavanagh

2 poems



maybe poets are dying

of heartbreak, deprived of their habitats—
those ecotones between listening and knowing—destroyed when
we drain the salt marsh of intuition, and dyke
thinking's fecund estuary.

maybe poets are dying because—attuned to comma-weight
changes—the increased parts-per-million airborne particulate
and ocean acidity make it impossible
for them to filter feed or breathe.

maybe poets are dying of hunger, the words that nourished
them slashed and burned, leaves of language processed
into tasteless, bite-sized pieces that render
rumination obsolete.

maybe poets are dying because it's too warm. after eons
bounding from floe to floe they find their long limbs unsuited
to office work, mortal ennui of emails and bagged lunches.
flagging memories of fresh seal.

maybe poets are dying of preventable diseases, fed the dried
and ground remains of other poets. where robust imagery flourished,
prions proliferate in their infected brains and spines
which collapse, turn custardy as brie.

maybe poets are dying because, like suckers, there's one born
every minute. or, like rabbits in lean times we permit
our bodies to be re-absorbed by the mother of all poets,
leaving the strongest of the litter to succeed.

How did birds

How did birds—those fish of the air—
come to be? How did it happen,
that gravity-defying feat, slow shift
from low slung reptilian creep
to featherweight sky-skimming?

With lots of leaping, one imagines.
Legs akimbo, tail as rudder, from boulder
to lower ground, from tree fern
heights and giant horsetail trunks
generations of pouncing, perfected.

And if Darwin was right, what chance,
what mutant flap of skin, or frill
of bristle or scale caught the air,
held that thrilled lizard a millisecond longer,
and set him down again, gently.

Then, eons of fanned filaments, tails
shrinking, climbing up and drifting down,
limbs ever lighter, diving, escaping, and —*wishing*?
Modified scales whistling in that little wind,
arms stiffly extended, then flapping,

seeking height after height,
until sky, not ground,
became home.

BASMA KAVANAGH is a poet, visual artist and letterpress printer originally from Nova Scotia and now living in Brandon, Manitoba. She produces artist's books under the imprint Rabbit Square Books. She is the author of the chapbook *A Rattle of Leaves* (Red Dragonfly Press, 2012) and *i* (Gaspereau Press, 2012). See her work at <http://www.basmakavanagh.ca/>.

To read more of Kavanagh's poetry in The Goose see

http://www.alecc.ca/uploads/goose/THE_GOOSE_ISSUE_8_FALL_2010.pdf

http://www.alecc.ca/uploads/goose/The%20Goose%202013%20Double%20Issue%2012_13.pdf

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