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Rewriting The Goose

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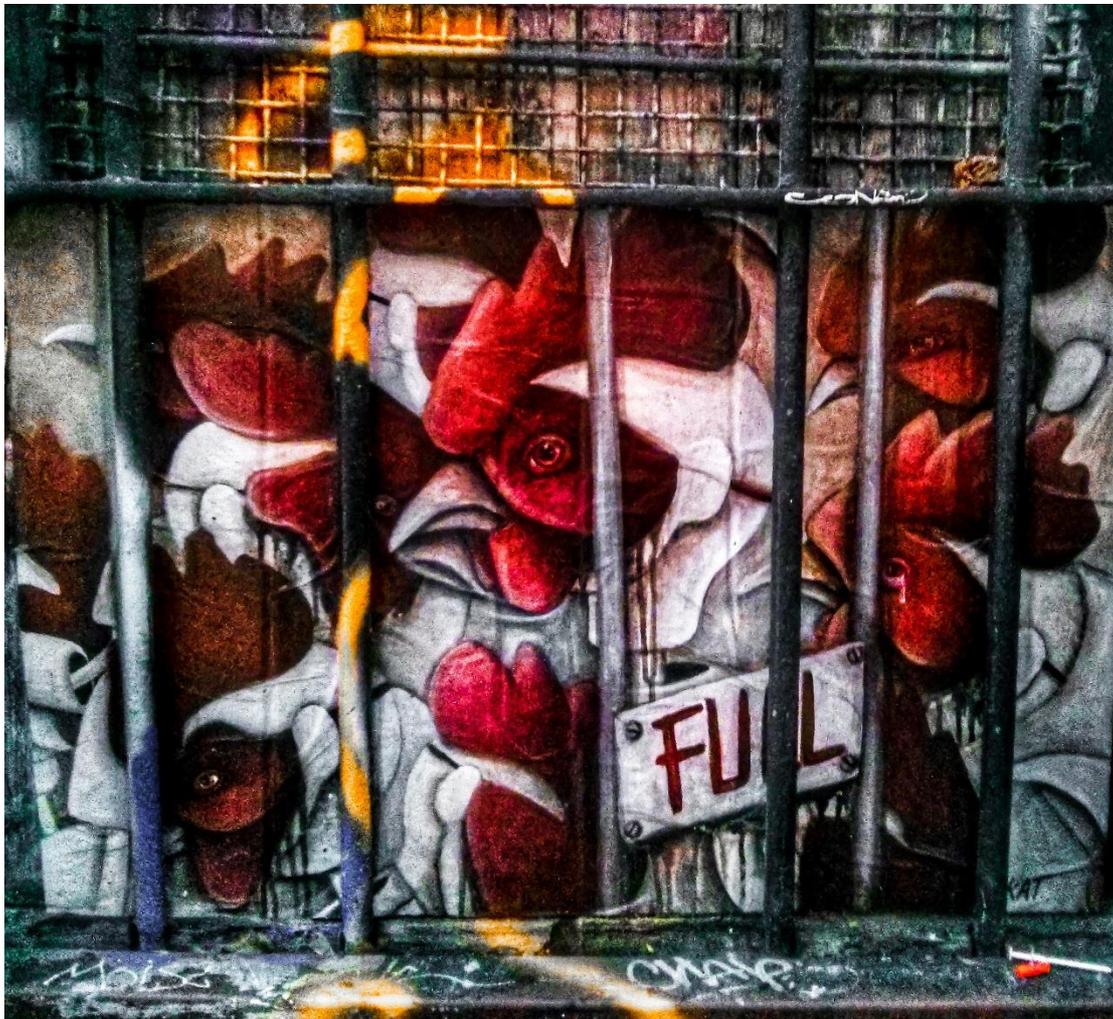
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Rewriting *The Goose*

by

Camilla Nelson

Poetry



Montreal street art (wheatpaste) by @Kat_street_art

photo by @urbananimality

Happy Tenth Birthday to *The Goose*, a dispersed selection of agencies that voluntarily and systematically flock together every six months to repeatedly produce such a high quality publication. I'm very proud to play a part in this gaggle.

For this special 10th Anniversary edition Lisa and I have shared the editing and commissioning of poetry. For my own part, this edition of poetry has a dual focus. The initial call was for poetry that engaged with, responded to, revamped or creatively retextured writing from *The Goose's* back catalogue. The idea was to stimulate a rereading of past issues in order to reform them, to use the past to create the future. The poems that came in were a fine variety of rewriting, mashup and textual reworking, alongside an unexpected number of unsolicited bird-themed submissions. As I considered these works side by side, interesting parallels began to emerge and the decision was made to embrace the unexpected literalism of this response and to use this issue to consider what it really means to rewrite *The Goose*.

The [Canada Goose](#) (*Branta canadensis*) moves between countries and peoples, migrating between environments, processing and reprocessing worlds: eating, storing, converting, excreting. *Branta canadensis* is an environmental translator, a material transmediator. This goose's range is international, with "native" populations in North and South America, "vagrant" and "introduced" populations in Europe, Asia and Australasia *The Goose's* range extends still further.

In "Gooseworld", **Marella Hoffman** writes about this process of migration:

Ignoring us, their long straining heads see nothing

but the somewhere they are pointed at,

some not-yet-there place seared into whatever

shared mind has driven them wingflap after wingflap

a thousand miles up the curving globe

gasping the stink of some intoxicating season

worth migrating for, risking all for, pant after pant.

How does this migration take place? How do these individual agencies co-ordinate to cross oceans? How do letters congregate in our brains to organize into words, sentences and paragraphs? And how do we orient ourselves between these letters and words? Do birds "pant"? How does our human-oriented vocabulary migrate and

colonize the lives of other species, co-opt others' words and experiences into our own? This edition is dense with correspondence.

Kate Rogers traces a connection between “carved birds”, a “pet starling,” the bird names “*White-throat sparrow, / House finch, Mocking / bird*” and the “red bird” that the sun frees from the tree. Rogers’ “Imitation” insists on the polymorphousness of our treatment of birds, and the solubility of our understanding of the realities and fictions of these birds as they migrate through their many forms. **Brook Pearson’s** “The cormorants and the crows” is, again, transformational:

and in my evening mind, in between the seal and the sea

you didn’t fall from the cliff

you became the seal, and dove into the green chop

to fish and find your way

Carol Watts continues this tracery of transmutation, this time taking the myth of the barnacle goose as her starting point. “In the loves of barnacles” is made up of nine stanzas, each made up of nine lines. This robust, retaining structure grounds the semantic and syntactic migration of her text: “Let me / grow geese, the long necks become other than I / will have been, and take flight.” That clear stanza structure and the steady internal rhythm of the work “shields us and our loose wandering”: “Clap that rhythm / no one of us is what we thought.” These final lines of Watts’ poem return us to the wingflaps of Hoffman’s “Gooseworld”: “Anticipate nothing / more than the beating of it.”

Gary Barwin’s audiopoem, “Counterpoint,” immerses Jonathan Skinner’s bird calls (*The Goose* 14.1) in water. Does a watery bird make a goose? **Andrew Taylor** has cut up the waters of Rhys Trimble’s “Dwr” (Vol 14.1) and reseeded Richard Skelton’s “Into the Bare Moreland” (Iss. 12, 2013). **Annabel Banks** is the most intrepid time traveler in this edition, journeying beyond the confines of *The Goose* to splice William Carlos Williams’ “The Red Wheelbarrow” (1923) with Bronwyn Preece’s “Isabels’ Wheelbarrow” (Iss. 11, 2012) and extending both to form “Bell in the Rain.” This is the only poem that shows its workings, that makes the mechanics of this textual migration visible. Here is reference, influence, confluence. “Bell in the Rain” is a traceable merging of waters. In “Gory,” Erin Robinsong’s work inspires **Ariel Gordon** to address the sea of blood through, by and from which we all—not just the “leaky collection of wives & daughters” she initially references—travel. And behind these, the echoes of another, older male voice, from over a century ago, watching anxiously the ominous circling of a falcon over a nation state on the brink of creation and / or dissolution: things fall apart, and are reformed.

The ecology of exchange common to all of these works is generative. **Pearl Pirie** has produced three works, each a separate response to a previous creation. Like Andrew Taylor, Pirie has proceeded to create these new works by way of erasure, forming new works out of the bones of the old, or as **Tanis MacDonald** says of her poetic

reworking of Daniel Coleman’s prose text (Vol 14.1), “I was interested in coaxing out a voice that I heard echoing beneath the original article, the voice that emerges in the half-bracketed sections.” The richness of this edition lies in the exposure of the inescapable plurality of voices that inhabit and inform us all. Perhaps, by reading through these pages carefully, by listening closely, we can begin to hear the individual within the mass, the plural within the discrete, and through these various reworkings understand something more of how it is that words travel through time and vocabularies migrate.

Works Cited

2015: *The Goose* 14.1

Coleman, Daniel “Deer in Their Own Coats”

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2015: *The Goose* 13.2

Robinsong, Erin “Seas”

2013: *The Goose* 12/13

Belford, Ken “internodes” & biographical note

Geleyn, Rebecca “Three Poems”

Richardson, Autumn “Crossing the Interior & Induviæ”

Skelton, Richard “Into the Bare Moorland”

2012: *The Goose* 11

Preece, Bronwyn “Isabel’s Wheelbarrow”

[“*Branta canadensis*”](#). *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Version 2013.2.

International Union for Conservation of Nature. Web. Retrieved 21 February 2016.

Williams, William Carlos. “The Red Wheelbarrow.” *Spring and All*. Paris: Contact Publishing Co. 1923. Print.

CALL FOR POETRY

After our celebration of everything audible in the poetry section of *The Goose* 14.1, the poetry section of *The Goose* 15.1 will be dedicated to the exploration of the **visual and material poetics of environment**. Send us your concrete, your imagist, your video, your visual material. Please provide external links to video material where possible and notes on the text where needed. Please see [Final Manuscript Preparation Guidelines](#) for formatting instructions.

We look forward to receiving your submissions!

CAMILLA NELSON is a language artist, researcher and collaborator across a range of disciplines. Visit her website for more information: www.singingapplepress.com.