

KRISTA COTÊ

Prosopopoeia of M.M.

Ten twenty fifty birds
fly by windows as I read a poem
by Marianne Moore—shut book—think
feast cooking in hot crowded adjoining room, stuffing,
gravy, yams, turkey, cin-
namon, nutmeg, pumpkin. Take in History
lesson from ancient philosopher
uncle swigging beer can cocktail
while stewing at televised show
of bravado—
recreation of captured yards and
muscle. Second quarter, stanza, six-pack,
History falls apart. At First Thanksgiving

new colonizer wraps
snow-down, eagle feather, arm around the
leather dress, colour of bread served
to seated companions. Of visitors there are man-
y, of natives there are
six (one woman); armed with peace pipe not musket
or sword. The foul water stands royal
empty: where is the Turkey? Three
days later we sat with stomachs
stuffed deceptive
depiction—an idealized
vision—Wampanoag would wear not feathers,
sit not on ground. Feathers yet bird-free, valued,

forged, forgotten. Foul
friendly found-nations words torn on tattered
leaves stamped in the eagle's hand, cock's
scratch, rapt around the branches of the crooked-leg flaming-
go-pink crape myrtle like
cherry or plum made idealized by gei-
sha or Victorian streets loved by
tourists, same species different home,

seeing new perspectives. Inside
 hollow, unfilled,
 uncompleted, unegged nest like the
poet more known for being a bachelor.
'Each with an excellence!' and waterfowl

supreme efficiency,
 who have seen water, seen air, seen land. And
poets whose stories were legends
told to new houseguests the Pilgrims. The sun never sets
 after the darkness sur-
 rounds and *ignis fatuus* light's on. The frigate-
bird, frigate pelican, poetic
endeavor and man-of-war bird
inflate your red disposition
 to acquire
 your mate, live like pilgrims, congregate,
take your food. There are patterns in the way
that your wings flap—that the lines end—you are

a man most artistic
 in the way you sweep your wings across the
sky. You are a man dangerous
in the wisdom of your wing; disturbed that lived in this
 nest, flies languid in love-
 ly circles, like a ship, resting in harbour
it sinks in the wind and raises the
mast in freedom and liberty.
The bird makes its art. We are told
 (by extinct breeds)
 'art is unfortunate.' And dancing
this way, like the ladies in dresses, swept
across floors that were swept and scrubbed and soaked

in the colours of this
 property only just yesterday. How
easily yesterday is for-
gotten on the tail of beauty and pride. A wee
 timorous dormouse squeaks
 to escape harsh underfoot of daintily
trod on by lovely, lordly, lady

of house; squeals back, alarmed of a-
ttack on her house. The family of
 this knavish mouse
 await him for dinner— he never
comes. Instead he has stained the parquet floor-
boards, the ground of this house, the foundation of

this lady's ball where her
 friends and polite enemies will stuff on
duck fat and goose eggs, pygostyle
with mole sauce and schmaltz imported from lands they've never
 seen and call themselves no-
 ble. Silly laughing crying baulking howling loon,
also seen by the name *Colymbus*
glacialis, more like a wolf than
any bird, swimming bird, avoid
 the land sight and
 swim quickly, Only the blood-ruby
red-throated noble loon still lives clustered
in nest. Yet males sail to pick nesting sites

fight to claim and defend.
 A talisman of the lake, crying in
darkness, 'making the woods ring with
his wild laughter'; forlorn for it has forgotten
 the untouched daytime. In
 Walden, sweeps away from boats while faithful
albatross sweeps down onto their decks.
Most notable known for their wing-
span and Coleridge and the *poète*
 maudit, like friend
 Rochester, though no one has seen it.
Idols, destructive, intelligent praise,
tie burdens 'round necks, may they disconnect?

Wings get tired flying
 on the shoulders of giants. A painter's
palette casts the shading of a species—
The more blue-green the deeper the red. How odd for
 the flamingo—long legged,
 standing on one foot, unsteady relation

of spoonbill and ibis—more recent
compatriot of loons—in his
bright suit, headdress of rose feathers,
 salmon fish cake
 h'orderves, of fresh blood on new snow or
down, made by gregarious greed: the white
flamingo is a rarity, an under-

nourished breed. The New World
 or Old Dominion lost and founded Old
World traditions, sees that Ra ate
tongues of pink-bird for breakfasts but ladies still wear the
 colour and eat quails eggs.

Mache and Ra invoked by the foul poured oil, lost
ancient dinosaurs of
youth, of plastic molded figures on lawn-beds
and mirrored neon bar walls lined with
 excessive libation, bottle
 green. Bottle-green neck and pilgrims white
collar, ancestor of the domesticated,
duck, distinctive by distinguished clothing, chin

strap of white, most often
 companion, Canada Goose, trademark of
skies, loved for their honking and their
horns. Goose who flies sometimes East to the West, or Europe
 where they are just *Branta*
 canadensis, not the patron saint of new
urban settlement. Once seen as though
gone, found in Rochester—sat-
ire against reason, of another
 kind, making light
 of kings and fowl misgivings; from un-
seen to overseen, served to wrong hands. What
of the paternal pheasant past primitive

polygamist? not al-
 ways a native and not always regaled.
Even it has a blue-green bright
ancestor bedecked in outrageous rags. Watch as its
 eyes get caught in the jaws

of the lion then thrown on the heraldry
of Man. Once plucked, the pink skin betrays
no disguise but take Darwin to
dinner and he shall say they will
still drive away
or kill their rivals, ask Locke and they
will take them for spoils—read Seneca, through
Wilmot—and become “lumber of the world.”

To the Greeks a symbol
non-decaying longevity forever, to Christian’s the all seeing
God, to Kartikeya a stead, rode
to war, and royalty everywhere, placed on the King’s
table for obvious
display. Braised and fried and pickled and poached, salt-
cured to ensure the longevity
Swans—the only forgotten fowl—
relatives to geese and the ducks.
Relatives—through the driveways of poor—
to flamingos and peacocks, alone in
their place in the fountains and rides. Relatives

muses and grace, Helen,
famous twins, famous lovers, and Hermes.
Birds that understand the divorce.
Aggressive defenders of home. Name means to
sing and in sanskrit say
hamsa and holy by Norse, although hated
by Skathi. “To bake a Swan Scald it remove
bones, parboil, and season place in deep
Coffin of Rye—downfall of which
Salem—serve like
a British Beef-Pie. Four and twenty
fowl-birds baked in, then fly away with old
traditions consumed, subsumed by the new. Like

frigatebird, dancing man-
of-war, beautiful stealing, like the dark-
ness surrounding the Wasteland. Dry
desert, picturesque, ignoble nobility. For-

give the darkness. Follow
the *ignus fatus*. Deny the monkey and
bear. When following the beauty and
light the direction always seems
right. Like a phoenix reborn; new
tail feathers,
the colour of blood and fire-red
crucible—insurgence of outsiders
flown inside, and painted by poets their own.

Noises fade on drunken
Relatives—fathers, uncles, grandfather—
in adjoining room, as we fall
asleep on grandmother's water bed—Slish Slosh, Slish Slosh—
dreaming of wild turkeys;
waterfowl, paddling with their frantic feet,
under the surface of this water,
seen only by experts diving down
through the wreck of these webbed toes.
Spider web pattern, thrust between
the claws of these,
evolution's prize is in this scene
and invisible except through these dreams.
What's seen above water is only the tip.