

The Throat Culture

At a red-lit crossroad,
a neighboring black Skylark
cages a pallid, plump, & solitary songbird—

the befouled prey of the vultures of our culture
whipping her plum head
& convulsing her call.

Plumage flailing, she wails
heedless of birders daydreaming through her skreigh of birdsong.

A song once stuck in her throat—choked back—
back when she gave credence to the strong-arm of bullies
—sticks & stones busted her up,
left her all beak-bloodied
with spit wet feathers.

The ruffians of authority chipped away at her timid heart,
wrung her neck over a chopping block—back then,
she felt just plucked—

but that was way back,
before she wrapped her wounds in black,
modified her skin as a safety pin cushion
marring herself in defiance,
& before she raised her first mohawk,
Black Flag & fist—

back before she questioned everything.

When she first spun punk music, it was like The Buddha found her—
she commandeered a vehicle free from the fogged panes of our existence.
She learned to breathe, learned to just be in her feathers—
Henry Rollins ate some mics—& that's an offering for some Dharma Punx—

every album, an affirmation that sometimes truth hurts,
but sometimes it hurts real good.

Like the truth that bullies are sleepwalkers—
stupefied in their prejudiced suppositions—
stumbling across calendar pages,
bewildered about the past & future—

& she wants to wake them.
wake them from their sleep-taunts, sleep-pills, & sleep-gospels—
'cause as her mercy for them grew, it ruptured the scar tissue
that sutured her chest-shell—
she opened up, & goddamn what hatched
was grace—

lyrics dislodged syllables cuffed to disconnected emotion,
a vowel-chained tongue snapped her repressed silence,
her high notes were cinders from hellfire in forced scripture,
& all her mumbled mealy mouthed curses
 & death wishes,
 screamed nightly
 into a pillow
 took flight & soared
 as her head lifted up—
 she lit up—became her own light.

She makes her own nest, she writes her own song,
& she doesn't hold anything above anything else—
 even up in her tree—not even herself.

She gets that,
everything is sacred & everything is profane.
The same as,
nothing is sacred & nothing is profane—

even the faces of critical bastards whose fear makes them beat & demoralize
 others against the belts of their beliefs—

they are just asleep
 behind the wheel
 at a busy intersection—

she honks at them & squawks,

you know nothing...belief is restricted...faith is boundless...
you have nothing...except today...today is now—
so wake up, so wake up.

I turn off my stereo
& perch my ears to listen—

straining against the window
only snatching tonal drones of rumbling engines idling,
but not in neutral...

I don't know her melody—
I still open my mouth
& lip sync.

Matthew Jackson