

POETIC AESTHETIC



THE **ART**GALLERY
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Warm up

Read the poem below. Draw whatever comes to mind,

In the forest

There was no wind

An old tree

Sunshine green shadows wind and rain

A small piece of land dotted with yellow leaves

In the sunset

An old man

Bent over

Counting the growing mushrooms

On the old fallen tree

Warm up



This is one artist's representation of the poem you just read.

How does it differ from your drawings?

Poet: Julianna Swaney

Artist: Ethan Huang

Hanging Mobile

The parrot's eye
speaks to the sun,
my son coos back
on his back, on the run.

Mosquito in the shade,
the night crows green.
Who rings the bell
where you've never been?

Baby Gus, Asparagus,
tips make a fist
to knock back the sun.

The parrot's eye
grows with the moon,
my son sings a bubble
in the bubble of his room.

Rubies in the griddle,
the cake falls down,
the knife runs for president,
the parrot runs the sun.

Baby Gus, Asparagus,
who rings the bell
when you ring the bell?

Smoke across the bridge
plunders the eyes,
the wind speaks back
what you recognize.

Jimmies rain down
the frozen zone,
the drops drop green,
who dropped the sun?





Song

There is no east or west
in the wood you fear and seek,
stumbling past a gate of moss
and what you would not take.

And what you thought you had
(the Here that is no rest)
you make from it an aid

to form no east, no west.

No east. No west. No need
for given map or bell,
vehicle, screen or speed.
Forget the house, forget the hill.

Song
for Thom Gunn
There is no east or west
in the wood you fear and seek,
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--Joshua Weiner

Cloak

Late May, skin tingled true with riot,
the screen door clapping shut behind me
on the final days of school. Beneath
the dogwood's white explosion, fragrance
of milk floated down and floated up,
each petal a portal, a pure cup
and sweet pill to cure us of winter
and call back the birds. The body dies,
but today I am taller, I can
tell time (but what will I tell him?) I'm
not good at reading . . . Running then not
to be late, the dogwood casting one
beam like a full daytime moon over
shortcuts, bamboo, bulldog, and quiet
creek water. A waking bulldozer:
who are the sleepless, who do they carry?
Nights I felt plagued by my body's heat
I'd strip and climb the dogwood branches.
Who wears the final cloak of summer?
The son of an ancient seed caster,
I was searching for a gate. I worked
hard but remained lost among faster
numerals interacting through blizzards
of feeling. I would not pick my scab
to speed the healing. One day, every
year, I'd return to find the dogwood
blossoms fallen like a great snow cape
silencing capacities of green.



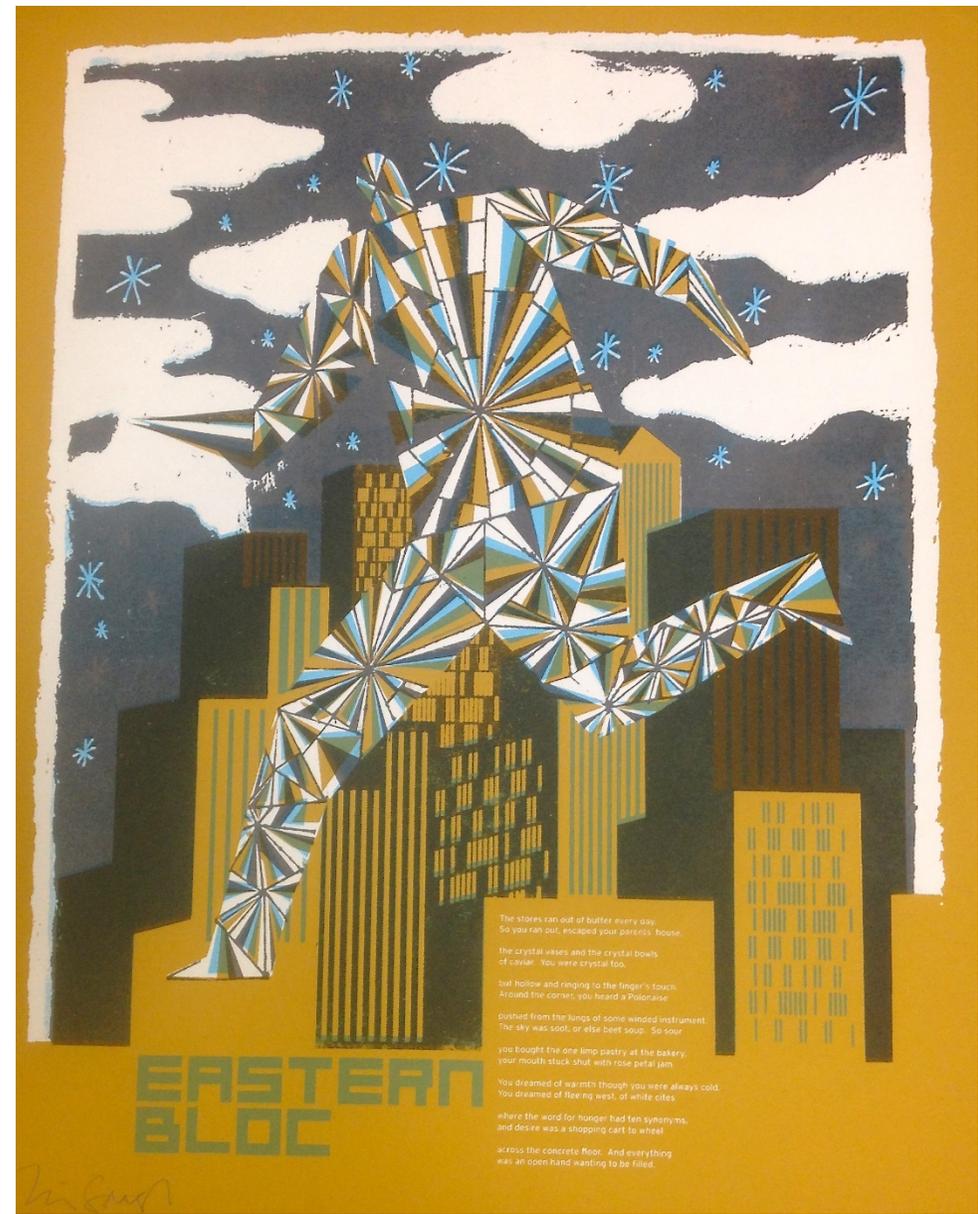
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Poet: Jehanne Dubrow



Artist: Tim Gough



Tea

Tonight I'm fruit and clove. I'm bergamot.
I drop a teabag in the cup and boil
the kettle until it sings. As if on cue,
a part of me remembers how to brew

the darker things—those years I was a pot
of smoky leaves scented with orange oil.
Truth is. I don't remember much of school,
the crushed-up taste of it. I was a drink
forgotten on the table, left to cool.
I was a rusted tin marked *childhood*.
I don't remember wanting to be good

or bad, but only that I used to sink
in water and wait for something to unfurl,
the scent of summer in the jasmine pearl.



Eastern Bloc

The stores ran out of butter every day.
So you ran out, escaped your parents' house,

the crystal vases and the crystal bowls
of caviar. You were crystal too,

but hollow and ringing to the finger's touch.
Around the corner, you heard a Polonaise

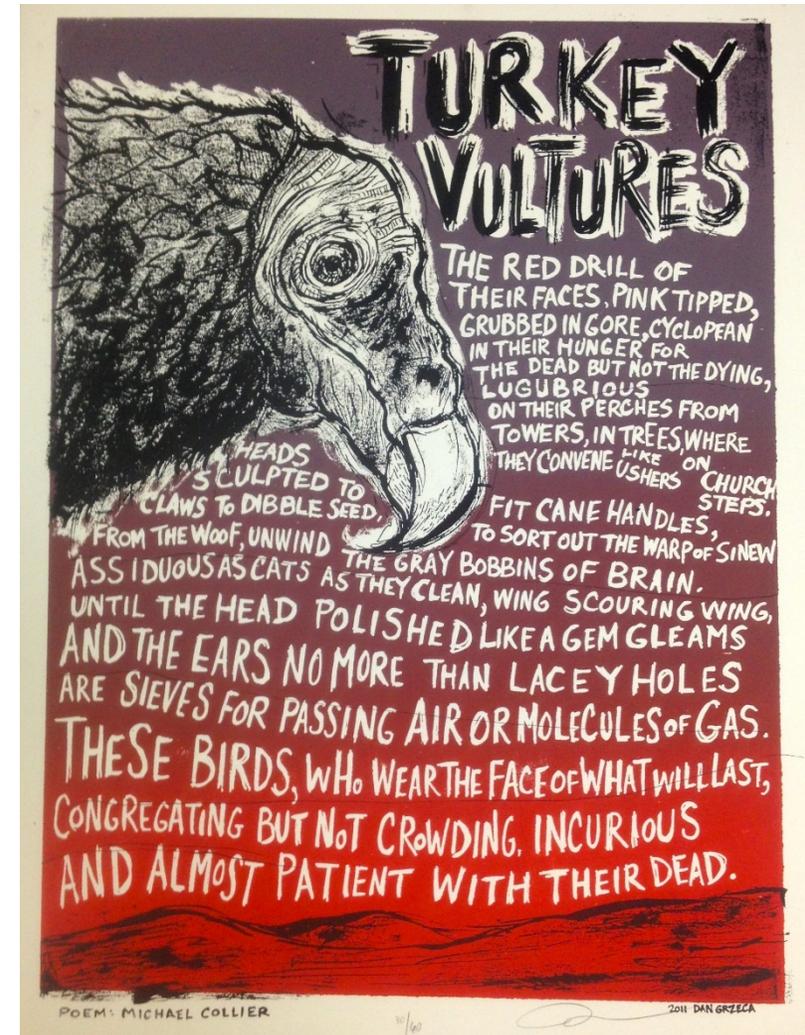
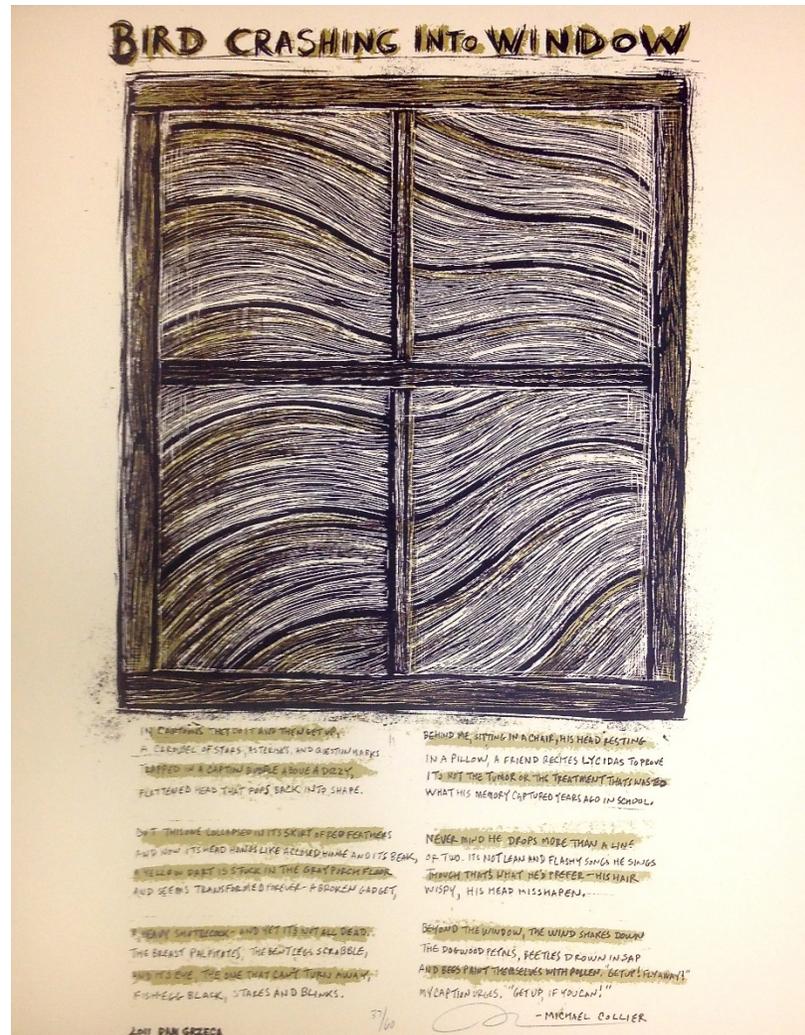
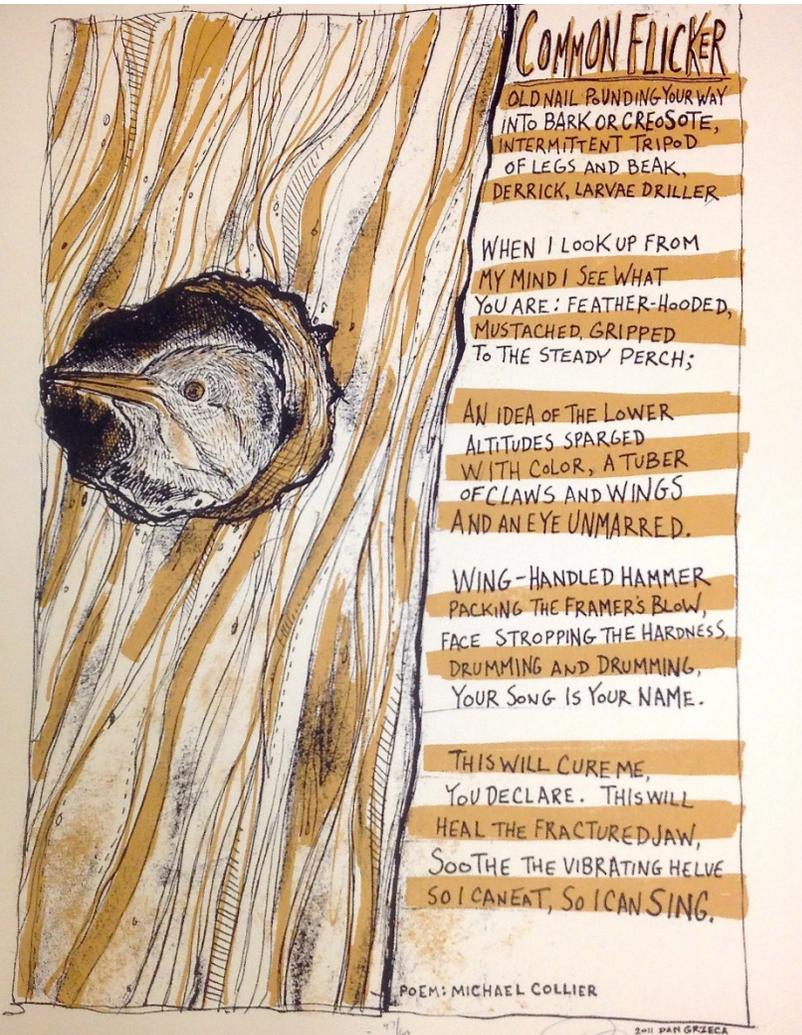
pushed from the lungs of some winded instrument.
The sky was soot, or else beet soup. So sour

you bought the one limp pastry at the bakery,
your mouth stuck shut with rose petal jam.

You dreamed of warmth though you were always cold.
You dreamed of fleeing west, of white cities

where the word for hunger had ten synonyms,
and desire was a shopping cart to wheel

across the concrete floor. And everything
was an open hand wanting to be filled.



Poet: Michael Collier

Artist: Dan Grzeca

BIRD CRASHING INTO WINDOW



IN CAPTION BUBBLE AND THEN GET UP,
A CAROUSEL OF STARS, ASTERISKS, AND QUESTION MARKS
TRAPPED IN A CAPTION BUBBLE ABOVE A DIZZY,
FLATTENED HEAD THAT POPS BACK INTO SHAPE.

BUT THIS ONE COLLAPSED IN ITS SKIRT OF RED FEATHERS
AND NOW ITS HEAD HANGS LIKE A CLOSED HINGE AND ITS BEAK,
A YELLOW DART IS STUCK IN THE GRAY PORCH FLOOR
AND SEEMS TRANSFORMED FOREVER—A BROKEN GADGET,

A HEAVY SHUTTLECOCK—AND YET IT'S NOT ALL DEAD.
THE BREAST PALPITATES, THE BENT LEGS SCRABBLE,
AND ITS EYE, THE ONE THAT CAN'T TURN AWAY,
FISH-EGG BLACK, STARES AND BLINKS.

2011 DAN GRZECA

BEHIND ME, SITTING IN A CHAIR, HIS HEAD RESTING
IN A PILLOW, A FRIEND RECITES Lycidas TO PROVE
IT'S NOT THE TUMOR OR THE TREATMENT THAT'S WASTED
WHAT HIS MEMORY CAPTURED YEARS AGO IN SCHOOL.

NEVER MIND HE DROPS MORE THAN A LINE
OR TWO. IT'S NOT *lean and flashy* SONGS HE SINGS
THOUGH THAT'S WHAT HE'D PREFER—HIS HAIR
WISPY, HIS HEAD MISSHAPEN.

BEYOND THE WINDOW, THE WIND SHAKES DOWN
THE DOGWOOD PETALS, BEETLES DROWN IN SAP
AND BEES PAINT THEMSELVES WITH POLLEN. "GET UP! FLY AWAY!"
MY CAPTION URGES. "GET UP, IF YOU CAN!"

—MICHAEL COLLIER

Bird Crashing Into Window

In cartoons they do it and then get up,
a carousel of stars, asterisks, and question marks
trapped in a caption bubble above a dizzy,
flattened head that pops back into shape.

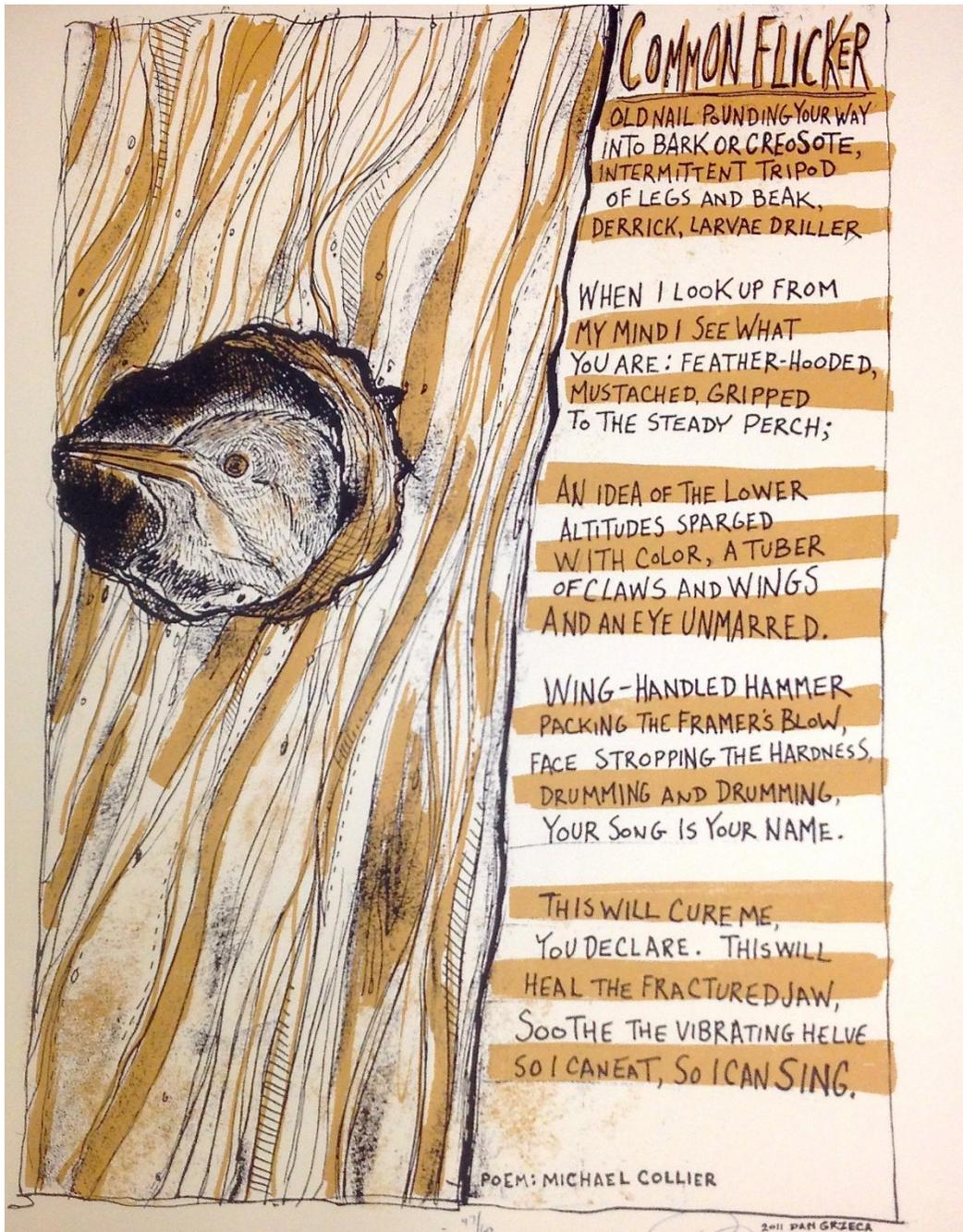
But this one collapsed in its skirt of red feathers
and now its head hangs like a closed hinge and its beak,
a yellow dart, is stuck in the gray porch floor
and seems transformed forever—a broken gadget,

a heavy shuttlecock—and yet it's not all dead.
The breast palpitates, the bent legs scrabble,
and its eye, the one that can't turn away,
fish-egg black, stares and blinks.

Behind me, sitting in a chair, his head resting
in a pillow, a friend recites Lycidas to prove
it's not the tumor or the treatment that's wasted
what his memory captured years ago in school.

Never mind he drops more than a line
or two. It's not *lean and flashy* songs he sings
though that's what he'd prefer—his hair
wispy, his head misshapen.

Beyond the window, the wind shakes down
the dogwood petals, beetles drown in sap
and bees paint themselves with pollen. "Get up! Fly away!"
my caption urges. "Get up, if you can!"



COMMON FLICKER

OLD NAIL POUNDING YOUR WAY
INTO BARK OR CREOSOTE,
INTERMITTENT TRIPOD
OF LEGS AND BEAK,
DERRICK, LARVAE DRILLER

WHEN I LOOK UP FROM
MY MIND I SEE WHAT
YOU ARE: FEATHER-HOODED,
MUSTACHED, GRIPPED
TO THE STEADY PERCH;

AN IDEA OF THE LOWER
ALTITUDES SPARGED
WITH COLOR, A TUBER
OF CLAWS AND WINGS
AND AN EYE UNMARRED.

WING-HANDLED HAMMER
PACKING THE FRAMER'S BLOW,
FACE STROPPING THE HARDNESS,
DRUMMING AND DRUMMING,
YOUR SONG IS YOUR NAME.

THIS WILL CURE ME,
YOU DECLARE. THIS WILL
HEAL THE FRACTURED JAW,
SOOthe THE VIBRATING HELVE
SO I CAN EAT, SO I CAN SING.

POEM: MICHAEL COLLIER

2011 PAN GRZECA

Common Flicker

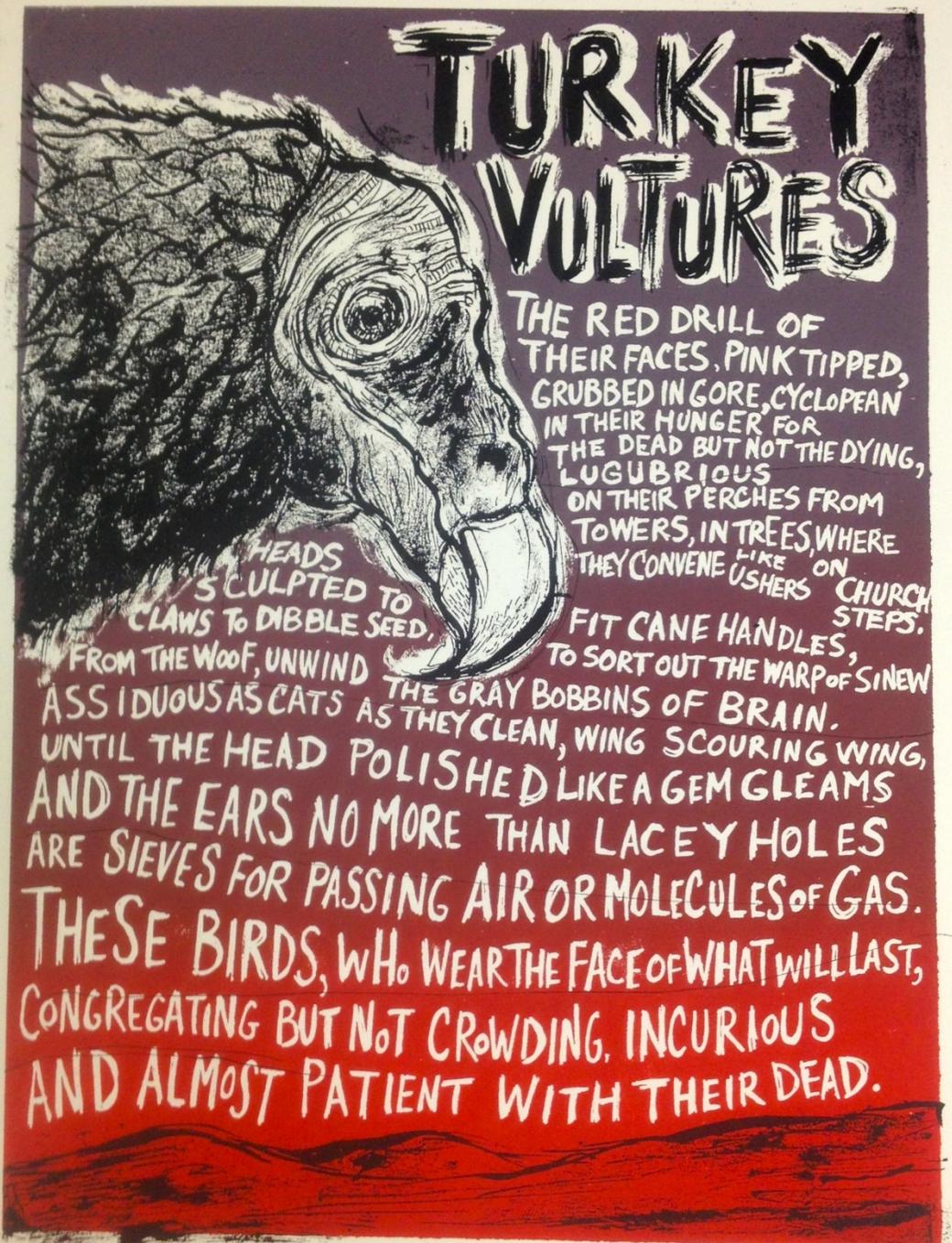
Old nail pounding your way
into bark or creosote,
intermittent tripod
of legs and beak,
derrick, larvae driller,

when I look up from
my mind I see what
you are: feather-hooded,
mustached, gripped
to the steady perch;

an idea of the lower
altitudes sparged
with color, a tuber
of claws and wings
and an eye unmarred.

Wing-handled hammer
packing the framer's blow,
face stropping the hardness,
drumming and drumming,
your song is your name.

*This will cure me,
you declare. This will
heal the fractured jaw,
soothe the vibrating helve
so I can eat, so I can sing.*



Turkey Vultures

The red drill of their faces, pink tipped,
grubbed in gore, cyclopean in their hunger
for the dead but not the dying, lugubrious
on their perches from towers, in trees, where they
convene like ushers on church steps.

Heads sculpted to fit cane handles, claws
to dibble seed, to sort out the warp of sinew
from the woof, unwind the gray bobbins of brain.
Assiduous as cats as they clean, wing scouring
wing, until the head polished like a gem

gleams and the ears no more than lacey holes
are sieves for passing air or molecules of gas.
These birds, who wear the face of what will last,
congregating but not crowding, incurious
and almost patient with their dead.



Poet: Elizabeth Arnold



Artist: Hero Design



The soldier dreamed he was a clay jar,
the kind shaped like a female body.

Had he been hit? He didn't know.
He stood in clay.

Spring came, but with the trees eviscerated,
you could tell the Earth moved forward

only by the birds, the cold's
momentary incinerations.



What if everyone were eyeless
and we could only

hear, feel space,

so that that feeling eclipsed seeing,
roared it to the side?

Old men's voices, chanting, channeling,
choruses in cathedrals



To appear, to shine
is to be a face.

Love possible without one?

Effacement's closer to death, the face
wingless,

nothing but a wing.



Poet: Dave Smith



Artist: Strawberryluna

Goose Blind

Wild reeds woven to a small room,
dying tips brown-gold and whispering
in wind-rattle. Porter, whose farm
is bare, fields married to water, honks
as if the earth is talking, his old gun
hugged to him, his bone nose up
for two dipping fly-bys. They veer, but
glide around. "Mated pair," he says softly.

I think of us, forty years ago, side by side,
going south on 17, Dismal Swamp's
bogs all green lace because March is
done, April's warm inlet calls us,
because we lay on the sand, car radio
booming James Brown, joyful news.
At Nags Head Bridge we turned back,
just married, tiny boats half-sunk in marsh.

Shivering, wondering why I am here,
a guest among floaters over marsh,
chopped corn where oysters were, each
wet black eye that knows only rising,
falling with the sun's time, unafraid,
like you, once, saying let's go so far
years drift, pile where all is surf,
roofs, the horizon we watch go dark.

Round and round the two fly, wanting
to eat, afternoon graying, wanting
to lie with the field's others, wanting
home's fixed, swaying silhouettes.
On sky's stair-steps, like guests, pairs
slip from V-lines, tumbling. They just
just can't go on, Porter says, honking
urgent cries they seem not to want to hear.



June Bug

The carapace-is that it?-shrugging forward
like a Roman war-wagon, dark gleam
from the sloped shoulders and the lowered head,
itself helmeted, swaying from side to side,
as if the great weight, with one slip
of purchase, might haul everything backward,
the massive thighs and horn-embraced
legs that dig ponderously, the tip-toe
forenails that grip surface, least or best,
and those already wounded, so they seem,
trailing appendages, brogans dragging.
To this, under the fore-arpits
I tie my string, sun like an egg's center, and
wait.

No sound. At first, no movement. Wait.
Then the big head, slippage until some
crack in the earth appears, and slant rays
of light leveraging it forward, grass blades
bent, twigs gone over like bodies,
small combatants scurrying aside, now and then
a pause, the heavy hold on air I think
is death until, at last, it rises up.
Shrugs on. Soon it will be dusk, dinner.
The earth is darker, a coolness floats.
Already the story breathes me. So I wait
as the string plays into darkness until all is
tug and touch, imagined, the big thing breaking off.

