

# THE BIRD HOVERER

by Aaron Belz

BlazeVOX [books]

Buffalo, New York

## THE PRESERVE

I'm on a lone bench in the dark.

Owls strain their eyes, and I feel their look,  
and the chain at the park  
gate clanks shut.

The apparitions of children with neon  
frisbees rotate around the barbecue—  
here come aunts with slippery bathing suits,  
and the wiffle father, the dark shepherd.

A car engine  
mulling through this public wood could  
be the ranger's, whose headlights  
flush up the ground-nesting birds  
till they scatter like spiders in the sky.

Behind the treeforms the moon hangs strange,  
mooning, bowing like a butler—  
everything in the park is unwanted—

a sea of woodpeckers rises to the fore.

Like a dish or a shirt now I lay me down  
on the bench as a fawn paws surreally past,  
and I cuddle my nylon jacket to me in the chill.

## SMARTEST CREATURES

Birds should be quiet.  
Birds should pray.

Dolphins have no idea what they're talking about.  
Dolphins don't sleep.

Birds run their fingers through their hair as they talk.  
Birds run into windows.

Dolphins ought to shut up.  
Dolphins are smooth like bottles.

Birds underappreciate sympathy.  
Birds would love to go swimming with you on Sunday.

Dolphins feel pain as they think about the past.  
Dolphins go everywhere naked.

Birds assume they own the world.  
Birds, in fact, are middle class.

Dolphins win you over with unexpected comments.  
Dolphins strive for peace.

Birds consume whatever people give them.  
Birds die dissatisfied.

## LEAF

It is not sad, this invented leaf,  
Because it does bend in the wind  
The way daisies do in a sweet shower,  
Because it stains, as it breaks under  
the pressure of my thumb, my thumb;  
Or rather it is invisibly sad,  
Because it is invisible to the eye  
And no more an invention than a word,  
This *leaf*, here forever, the last email  
Sent by one who swore *never again*,  
Once in the inbox, now deleted,  
A whole branch full of words  
That had grown, if not out of love  
Or sweet, false, virtuous showers,  
Out of each of our desperation to know  
And to be known by one another.

## CANARIES

The jackknife you filched  
with etchings of boxing gloves on it  
reminded me of the metal fruit  
in the center of the table at Canaries Street,

for both were perfectly round  
and gave off an inaudible hum  
like that of a remote dishwasher.  
When Susan came bounding down the stairs

with her arms full of teen magazines  
and hollered something to Rudy  
about your new jackknife,  
I came in from the field where

I had been sitting in a lather  
about my cracked telescope case.  
I said, *Rudy's not in earshot, sister,*  
*he ran out for decorative pomegranates;*

*the Lipscombs are coming tonight*  
*and we want the place fresh and ready.*  
And I saw you skinning yams  
over a mixing bowl in the kitchen.

Not with your inexplicably spherical penknife,  
but with a small, tangled fork  
of only two tines, in our factorylike  
residence on Canaries Street.

## RAVENS AT THE ZOO

A flock of ravens followed me to the zoo:  
there, they pecked at my soda.

I looked up, and they pecked at my eyes.  
They sat upon my shoulders and relieved themselves.

I am almost too modest to relate these details.  
White spots began appearing on my shoes.

My hat felt too tight, so did my glasses.  
So did my pants, even though they were new.

Something about these birds was causing me to grow.  
I expanded, slowly, for the better part of the afternoon.

What was it about the ravens that prompted  
what might best be termed an odd physiological reaction?

## CLARE CONSIDERS

Clare considers the sane and insane patterns of the mind.  
What carved them there she will never know.  
All she can do is look at hippopotamuses now,  
while the brochure in her hand rustles in the wind.

We love to talk about Jesus and forgiveness at the zoo  
among antelope, snakes, and bears that should not be there.  
Though feelings coil confusedly, the parrots are clear,  
perhaps bright denizens of where we ourselves should go.

Water-dwelling animals control their slippery humps  
as Clare and I suck on cones of crushed and flavored ice.  
I think about the fact that we are the same in many ways,  
yet different in profounder ones. I walk with a limp,

she without. I drive a van, Clare a white Accord.  
In both our pockets jingle pennies pressed with our names,  
our shoes are hot against the asphalt. We are the same,  
yet different. I own a house she could never afford.

She is still in high-school yet seems, in some ways, old.  
She comments on the wonderful texture of elephant ears.  
We both struggle against darkness, but against different fears.  
We are a grizzly and a cub, a glue-horse and a foal.



I hereby request  
that they wipe the silly smirks off their faces  
and find other people to circle, other places  
to drop their glob-like feces, and that is all  
I ask of them, not that we can't exist on the same  
planet, free-thinking individuals,

in equal

if separate and clearly demarcated communities.

## ANDREA AND THE BEES

A yellow fusion of gradients,  
These bees whirled up *en masse*

And away from Andrea's storm gutter  
While she banged

A shovel on the siding.  
The insects growled off into the wind

And a new hurricane rose  
Up, a violent thing from Spain

Carrying obsolete artifacts, chimney  
Bricks, tar paper. Andrea

Ran into her house bleating,  
Crying out for mercy.

Then seven stacks of blue lightning  
Pinioned the seven corners of the earth

Throwing huge volts  
Among the dying trees of Andrea's

Neighborhood, making the night day.  
She got out her power binoculars

And peered from her bay window, and she saw  
It was her religion coming to get her.

## MARXISM

Let me ask you something, Shonda.  
How did you get so good on organ?

*I practiced a lot when we lived in Oregon.  
I mainly played a lilting rondo.*

So let me ask you something else;  
would you join me for wine and sturgeon?

*I'll join you if we don't use knives.  
My other husband was a surgeon.*

I understand. One of my wives  
trafficked cocaine in money belts,

and I never wore one thereafter.  
I know it's a little bit different.

*Well, whatever pays the rent  
is what I say. In the hereafter*

*such things won't matter, Bill, will they?  
Let's bladeless dine on fish and wine.*

In heaven it will all be fine.  
Here we still practice chivalry.