

The Birds: Ode to a Rock Dove

By Guest Contributor

Categories : Featured

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—For JPD

You're right.
A blackbird taken apart
by a raptor is not the same

as the nestling pigeon,
wet from rain,
run into the

clogged freeway
by slavish,
hulking cars.

And of course it was a pigeon—
rat-of-the-sky,
pest,
dirty dirty bird—

call it
what they will,
you wish the authorities

would restore its name to dove,
dove, with all the potential
of cliches.

For isn't that part of it?
We are a nation
in love with the idea

of pulling oneself up
by the bootstraps,
even as we call them pigeons,

even as we crush their bodies
as we inch forward dumbly
in our commute of tedium.

This ode is to the bird
that hadn't yet grown feathers
with which to rescue itself

(and was given
no second chances)
so join me, reader,

with the same empathy
extended to the underdog,
and imagine its life if lived:

Imagine the search
for cold fries under a table
in pursuit of sustenance and survival

Imagine the spin and flash
of emerald and royal purple
in the drive to mate and remake

Imagine the power
of full-fledged wings
in the rush of rising up

up above traffic
up above streets
up above city

to look down on all of us.



Originally from Maine, **Nell Smith** is a field biologist and writer based in Northern Arizona. Much of Nell's work is ecologically rooted as she examines the interplay between people and place. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in Hawk & Whippoorwill, Sky Island Journal, the Aureorean and Alligator Juniper.