

Spring 2009

Birds

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Recommended Citation

Miskowich, Brian (2009) "Birds," *The Platypus*: Vol. 1, Article 37.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.kent.edu/platypus/vol1/iss1/37>

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Birds

Brian Miskowich

The house was red. The guest house brown.
I repainted both.
The guest house needed to be sanded.
Toxic grit
 flung from the paneling.
I wore sandals and it stuck in my toes.

Packing the pottery. Crumpling the paper
 to pad the pots.
I crumpled until I was sure the next piece
would slice my hand.
And I crumpled still.

Then, with hands raw but whole,
I walked to the guest house.
It was empty.
I heard speech from inside but don't remember what was said.
My mother and brother.
I stopped on the steps.

Turning about I looked.
Looked at the bark of the great eucalyptus.
Looked at the vines on the hill.
Looked at the shining mansion across the canyon,
 the one that had always shined.
Looked over my small home at the pine tree.
 The two-trunked standard bearer.
And looked up.

Up at the top of the tree, a bird sat with two birds beside it.
Large birds with great wings. I could see only silhouette.
One turned its head and the others followed.
Small heads with thin beaks.
Strength and weakness at home, it seemed,
 with one another
 in each bird.

I looked away.
The mansion no longer shined.
The ivy smothered the small tree on the hill.

I saw that the eucalyptus was missing two great boughs.
The houses were newly painted.
The furniture removed.
The floors and ceilings swept and cleaned.

I sat and looked at the red house.
And did not weep.



Sherri Quirke Bolcevic