

Behold

behold, my colors blur
i have slid off the shape of myself
broken and breaking are all my bones
my intentions trail after me
I have lost my beginnings and endings
my shadow body is a haze
my wings askew in the creases of the creek
are a fade, disappearing

Behold, I am making all things new. Revelation 21: 5

feather

hope is the thing with feathers Emily Dickinson

lovely
as the day it came to be
called feather
a sun struck wisp
snagged in a tangle of cordgrass
anchored to its own reflection
in the nonchalant creek
solitary, though designed for community
useless now, though created for flight
and for what purpose does it
retain its unsinkable beauty
cast off, frayed?
rising tide will unpin it
release it to a new direction
to drift aimless on the unheeding creek
catch the eye of the beholder
evoke a certain intimacy
an impression of companionship
of lament and loveliness
to make for a wondering
where it has been
and where now still is
and is being taken
lovely

grace notes

pallid creek
birds streaking down, wings sun flashed
quiver surface of creek
splash shapes motion
all along its edges
color stirs the water
swims the creek.

now the tricolored heron strikes the water
scurries its own image:
it tiptoes along, streamers of leg trail behind it.
you watch the bird: its feathers so intricately arranged
its precise beak and claws, its blinking eyes scan the water
for fish and then
you see suggestions of bird
body bent and blurred
neck sliced into latticework
the bird so attentive to its prey
the reflection so attentive to the bird
sun and water dissolving precision into impression
vague, suggestive
but always there:
self contained, the bird itself and the business at hand
and its unconfined reflection, which chases or sidesteps or leads but
cannot escape the presence of its image maker
nor can it prevent its own dissolving

the bird does not notice its clinging beauty fading
in and out of focus with every fleck of motion
and you feel in yourself your own intentions and scatterings
you see what the water presents as bird
and its constant shadow companion
mocker of precision
how creek and bird together, without conscious intention, paint this patchy theology
of what has come to be, what can come of it, and how the heart is
stirred by loss and longing
these are a singing

Reflected Glory

On the fifth day, God breathed
out a substance of wings and webbed feet, feathers
of every hue, birds of every calling and disposition,
an extravagance of joy, including
a sense of the absurd (so testify the pelican and the spoonbill).
These days, it is not the birds themselves, but the birds
which are not birds which call to mind for me
their maker's breath still lingering in the washed and fading lines,
even in their blurring. Shattered and lovely in their shattering,
out of focus, upside down, blur of light, wind, fish scatter,
wrinkled, their true shapes just perceptible on the
creek that is sometimes not a creek,
itself beset with ambiguities:
every emptying crevice wistful, a hollowing,
every filling a mercy refracting to a new view.
The little blue sees himself floating as he searches
for food, his own reflection a hunger itself.
The fact of his hunger skitters the fish,
breaks his image into shivers of bright light,
hope substantial, dissolving, perceptible...

*For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror;
then we shall see face to face. 1 Corinthians 13:12*

