



Dale J Rappaneau Jr is a non-traditional student who lives in Bowdoinham, Maine. As a former journalist, his poetry relies on narratives, visual details, and juxtaposition, which he interweaves with his life experiences, to create poetic language that his fellow students have described as “elemental,” “violent,” and “primal.” And that’s just fine by him.

it explodes like a house cat.  
it bounces off the undercarriage  
and disappears into a dark trench  
overripe with road trash. it's the driver  
braking hard and gripping the wheel  
as if afraid it might all upside-down—  
as if god may unplug gravity  
so it all soars into space, the rocks  
and road and Nissan Altima, earth shrinking  
in the side mirror, blue into black  
—poof!—gone like the cat.  
but no—god has no hand in it.  
it's the car in reverse, the driver panicked  
rolling down a window, leaning into the night.  
it's the adrenaline afterglow of the heart,  
and the speed at which we move on:  
lurching forward, then slowly accelerating  
into tomorrow, in hopes it might not be so bad.

at the dinner party last night, near the brioche and boxed wine, it occurred to me i've never seen how a death's-head hawkmoth puts itself down a human throat. i imagine its dusted wings frantic against the flesh of an open gullet. i imagine the drool and spittle lotion slick on its thin legs. i'm sure the bug panics. i'm sure its antennae beat on the esophagus walls and when it plunges fluttering into stomach acid its abdomen explodes with juice and drab color. i imagine its thin silk layer of skin peeling away. i imagine this as the evening moved us in its mouth, or maybe in a way we forced ourselves into its dark maw. why else would we arrive so willingly, drunk on the daily honey of what it takes to deteriorate? too often i am too morose until it gets interesting. too often i am eating cheese with a side of moths, the absurdity of myself pouring forth as if from a punctured hose, drenching these wings, this party, this hole i fall into again.

Dale Rappeneau JUST ANOTHER ELEGY FOR A CHICKEN

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my six yellow hens forage  
on the lawn. it's high noon  
of summer—black fly  
season, when insects  
swarm to the waterholes of  
horse eyes—and already i  
am drunk on the heat and  
sweat of digging post  
holes, working palms raw  
and blistered, unaware  
that my young white husky  
has already sprinted across  
the lawn and dug her teeth  
into the soft plumage of a  
buff orpington. already the  
dog is whipping the poor  
bird back and forth in  
a cloud of feathers, snapping  
the avian neck at odd  
angles. already i am  
running, even now,  
panicked at the thought of  
what mangled gore i'll find  
when i arrive, and i am  
distraught by how much i  
need this to be a metaphor  
for my sister. how i need to

write things like the *bird's*  
*lightweight wing bones*  
*snapped when the world*  
*went feral*, and not feel her  
run through me. i am tired  
of getting my metaphors  
mixed because i can't  
unmuddy this grief. i am  
sick of seeing her buried  
beneath these words. yet  
still i carry her memory as  
one carries the limp corpse  
of something bird-like and  
frail: its eyes dark as oil,  
limbs punctured  
repeatedly in some sick  
massacre of the flesh, this  
bundled sorrow again  
placed in a shallow grave  
to be unearthed at the  
faintest reminder, the  
shovel always in reach, the  
weight of it leaning into me  
as i again lean into my  
work.

it's winter over the abbagadasset river.  
from the old bridge i hear them in the smelt shack,  
voices out there on the frozen riverbend, cries  
and pleasure sighs of yes yes and yes,  
obscene in their disregard for fishing.  
and i think, yes, that's what love is:  
strangers huddled in little huts, warm  
above the glowing ice—so careful  
in how they avoid the dangling hooks—  
so belligerent in how a discarded bra hangs  
from the doorknob as if their shouts aren't enough.  
standing there, watching snowflakes tumble from gray  
clouds, i remember how my father kneeled into wet  
earth in search for nightcrawlers, his pants muddied  
from being out all night, crawling on his belly, feeling  
his way across the world as if blind. and i think, yes,  
maybe that too is love: the aching strain of joints,  
the clumsy fondling of empty holes. there is passion  
in casting lines and letting them go unanswered,  
in sinking into the mire with all intent of getting dirty.  
and maybe i'll tell you this tonight, my love. maybe i'll  
tongue the words in such a way that makes you squeal  
with understanding, naked of all ignorance,  
and blatant as a bra waving like a flag for all to see.