

Notes for meltwater

In Craig Evenson's *Meltwater*, we sit by the side of the road watching the season's change amongst our fellow communicators: wolves, foxes, dogs, cats, an aviary of birds taking ques from a hawk. We smell the freshly-cut grass embracing a father's body; we stare into the deep eyes of our neighbor, the crow; we spend time in hospital lobbies, loading truck beds with benches marked "free"; we attend a family reunion where a mother asks, "How long must we live?"

Our shared world with the woodlanders is never quite lonely as we watch them and they watch us trampolining, applying the Gyotaku method while leaving behind shadows dipped in ink. In Evanson's collection, framed pictures don't look back while we travel many miles only to face the brief cycle of life. Beautifully crafted, we welcome the wise eyes behind these words.

(a symphony of voices)?

Crow and Sky

eye deep in feathers,
the smart zip, hook, and catch
of barbules up the shaft, eyes
averted, eyes shut maybe dreaming
of his own perfect blackness

Tonight the Snow is Not Falling

it's dropping
too sharp for thought
as if that were its unfortunate job:
slice to mist
every word
but the ones that can walk
on its edge,
the dangerous way everything happens,
each flake a straight trail
intersected a thousand quiet times
endowing the dark
intricate nights
of unleaved branches
saying each needle
each note of birdsong,
the ache of existence,
my frozen hands
on the shovel's handle.

Thaw

In the next room they're

talking about the world.
In back the bench
and branches are piled with fresh snow.
Even the twigs hold their share.
A nuthatch climbs, all intent,
around the conked trunk of an ash tree.
Spring is coming
as surely as the end of the world.
We feel its appetite from a thousand miles,
its songful breath veiling the tinnitus of winter.

The wet heavy snow
smiles even as it melts,
flows gleefully along the curb,
falling into the storm drain,
heading home with a howl.

Easter Storm

All day the wind wore white.

Inevitability

Damselflies,
farfetched as the rest of it,
warm their wings.
pulling the day back down
to black and restful rubble
where damselflies sleep brickwinged

Nightgale

The gull broken as only
a closely made thing can be
drags a crippled wing
like a sodden suitcase
away from a man handling a huge kite
over a bikini girl
tips its head at whirling shades
sheen of sea and sky
its alphabet and origin
form in flux

As Only the Dead

when the dog comes back from dark
with a beeping baby rabbit,
his instincts so strange to him
he can't think what to make

of the thing that belongs in his mouth,
he drops it in the grass.

She

She slit her eyes
broke open a poem
laid her finger on a word.
She cut it out,
framed and hung it.
She took it room to room,
a bare nail in each.
There had never been anything
like the breath of the word
at the head of her narrow bed.

Waiting: waiting in hospital lobbies

Lydia: python girl,

she took my glasses. I paused while
she cleaned them with a tissue and the stillness swelled,
cracking a brittle fastness, until twin pools of polished air fell
like geese on my eyes.

Sunday at the Farm: my head on the end of the rifle

Mere Choice: Wrong path to the broken mill

Fetish: the sculptured foot (tongue and cheek)

Northern Religion:

because I won't talk
about my day
with my mouth full
of moonlight.

Breathing: wise naturalist

Gyotaku

We needed another fish, so one, a pretty
pumpkinseed, was scooped from the aquarium
and left in an empty sink until it stopped
flopping and gulping. Taken up, wiped dry
brushed with ink, pressed onto a white t-shirt
rinsed off, passed around, scales, tail,
gills, all around the eye, inked
over a different color, sometimes a florid

combination: orange ventral, green dorsal, a yellow crescent over the gills, covered with a paper towel, pressed hard every inch for a detailed print minus the eye, indicated by a vacant circle as if eaten out by a scavenger. When it was over, someone, in casual hope or slender regret, dropped it back into the tank where it filled itself with air, woke, and swam, indistinguishable from the other fish until it died.

Goose: life/death/and its cycle

Bench: loaded the truck with free benches

Feather

I watch the birds.
They don't mind being seen
but they don't sit still for it either.
The sky is gray and puffy like rocks.
wishing for a long tail
to brush away late waking flies
when a long primary feather
falls out of the sky

A Family Reunion: where we bring into focus a mother's question: How long must we live?

Where squirrels watch humans trampolining

Good Friday: framed pictures don't look back

World Made Innuendo: the tomes brief lives