

Hare
Jenny Donnison

Hare
wheels over field and moor
spring quickening in long bones.
Past solstice hinge
she is revealed.

Courtship starts in winter's dark
with slick young bucks
close and hopeful
alert for danger.

Tail-waft fertility.
Grown males draw near.
Box hard to ward them off
till good and ready.

Dig a shallow form on windswept earth
alongside birds who scrape a nest.
Leverets know
they must be still.

At night the lampers dazzle her.
She trembles in the long grass,
skitters away.

Poetry

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*The University of Sheffield's
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*Ectopistes migratorius*¹
Jenny Donnison

There will always be pigeons in books and in museums, but these are effigies and images, dead to all hardships and to all delights. [...] They live forever by not living at all. Aldo Leopold, 1947²

The passenger pigeon
inert in a tissue nest

no longer dines on blueberries in Canada
feels the kiss of sun,
the lash of wind and weather.

A stuffed skin, breast rosy plush
head and wing slate blue
streamlined symmetry of long tail.

Tornadoes of pigeons
once blackened horizons
fledged the air, blotted the sky –
soaring crescendos of dissonant song.

They roosted in forests, fed on mast.
Branches buckled under weight of birds.

To the Seneca they were 'big bread',
harvested with bows and arrows, nets.

They took the fattened flightless squabs
in their hundreds, yet they were abundant.

The railroad came.
Settlers cut down swathes of trees,
dead birds shipped east, packed in ice.

Greed smothers the ground,
a wing flutters

¹ This poem was written after seeing a specimen of a passenger pigeon at Leeds Discovery Centre, during the 'Northern Animals #2: Animals & Borders' workshop, 13/10/17.

² Aldo Leopold, 'On a Monument to the Pigeon', A Sand County Almanac (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).

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