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“Blackbird Spring”

William Heyen

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Blackbird Spring

WILLIAM HEYEN

Mid-morning, walking ocean shoreline,
I found a hundred blackbirds
frozen in ice,
only their heads protruding,
their black eyes open,
gleaming, most of their sharp beaks still
scissoring in mid-whistle.

Feeding, they'd been caught
in sea-spray, must be—
all males, up north early,
their scarlet epaulettes aflame
a few inches under. I chipped
one bird loose with a stone,
held it in gloved hands

under the rising sun until,
until I realized, until I realized
nothing I hadn't known.
The tide retreated & would return.
Within the austere territories
these would have filled with belligerence
& song, spring had begun.