



In honor of National Poetry Month  
April 2021

During a pandemic, imagining Shawnaudithit's last year

where at last the feathers sink  
into your skin—too-heavy legs  
molted—your body new and  
sudden—and the webs of light  
climbing down the water  
to crown your head—you dart and sink  
and surface—bright capelin slick  
down your gullet—and the muscles wrapped  
around yours guide you west by reflex—  
know the way to that island where everyone  
waits for you on shore  
then you wake on a mattress.  
quills gnaw through the seams  
below you the house-cat is purring  
while she snaps the bones  
of a sparrow into small bits. you squirm  
with fever. the mattress spits feathers  
up into the air. they peak in a mull of sun,  
dead skin suspended. drop again  
settle onto your fists, weave into the hair  
on your arms and legs. you're inside  
its body, but the bird is missing.  
you shut your eyes. lashes hot against  
lashes. the body can carry so much  
death inside it. then birds  
for all the rest of your days.

--Erin L. McCoy

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