

13 Ways of Looking at Jeff Hecker

After Wallace Stevens

1.

After his poetry reading, I follow the poet to his car:

Aren't you the poet, Jeff Hecker?

No, no he replies. I am the blackbird who betrays him.

2.

In the snow-filled arms of the cedar, only the blackbird, and Jeff Hecker reaching for its tail feathers.

3.

Our professor sits on her desk, uncrosses her legs.

She reads a poem by Jeff Hecker and begins to laugh – tickled by a feather of the blackbird.

4.

When Jeff Hecker was a little boy, his parents, startled by sounds of pots banging in the kitchen, found him standing at the stove, boiling the blackbird.

5.

If it begins to snow without warning, it must be Jeff Hecker beginning a poem with the birth of the blackbird and ending with the birth of the blackbird.

6.

Mary Oliver walks through the woods warbling for the blackbird of her poem. She finds Jeff Hecker beating it to death with a tree branch.

7.

Before the altar, Jeff Hecker tips his top hat,
taps his cane, lifts his black suit tails
like the wings of the blackbird.

8.

Jeff Hecker believes Edgar Allan Poe should have titled “The Raven”
the “Blackbird” mainly for the alliteration , but also because,
what difference would it make?

9.

*Everything I believe, so does the blackbird, Jeff Hecker tells me.
I know who I am – so does the blackbird.*

10.

A child found the bones of the blackbird,
asked if they should bury it.
They dug the hole and Jeff Hecker sang,
Blackbird singing in the dead of night.

11.

Jeff Hecker and his wife, Robin,
are one. Jeff Hecker, his wife Robin,
and the blackbird
are three.

12.

*If I were an animal, Jeff Hecker tells me, I would be the blackbird
accidentally flown into the American flag
furled at half-mast.*

13.

It is not the shadow of the blackbird
Jeff Hecker watches but the shadow
of Jeff Hecker the blackbird watches.

Bank Robber's Note

I am in love with you, bank teller.
So lift the cool swim of your dress
and call me Jesse James.

The clock turns on twelve,
its guns drawn. I have a silver
dollar in my boot heel.

Kiss me. Your mouth
like a bullet, my spurs spinning.
Keep your eyes on me.

This is a robbery.

Burden

1.

I am chasing a child through a garden
of thistle and blazing stars. The dire
diamond of summer heat surrounds me.
Five fingers in the foxglove, honeysuckle,
hornets in the hibiscus. Somehow,
this morning, this child is in our bed
under the red sheets looking for his hands.
I was beginning to give up on you,
he says. *I am ready to be named.*

2.

In the shade of the Judas tree,
among the slender blue flags nodding
their necks. Among the trumpets,
Turtleheads, jack-in-the-pulpit,
We find a bird - a cardinal, like a small flame.
Is it dead? he asks.
I cannot answer. My eyes
are in the thorn bush and another child
is pulling himself out of my mouth.

3.

Having been lost for so long,
he enters each room,
demands to know where we have been,
why he could not find us. We ask
forgiveness, milkweed blooming
from his hair, galax and arrowhead.
Adam and Eve bowing under the maple.
We did not know you would grow.
We did not know you would live.