

## **Ghost in the Sedge**

-- Matt Daly

One by one, sandhill cranes  
land in late season pastures scattered  
with harvest leavings. The structures we rafter  
together hem them in. Their sounds catch in our ears  
like husks of song. Their gestures linger  
as gracefully as passing dancers. The rush  
of their wings erases what we thought of  
as boundaries. There is much to fear  
and there are layers of evening  
we have not yet cluttered with our wants  
and our worries. Like red ribbons around our fingers,  
the cranes tarry, drawing us into the open  
beyond our autumn doors.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> poem

### Crane Pasture with Father and Son

-- Matt Daly

We say *ancient* and mean outside  
the tick-tock, beyond the grasping  
of columns and rows. We stay out-  
side well past dawn. My son  
is not yet born and my son says his first  
word, *farm*, and my son is circling  
on updrafts past my capacity  
for exhale. He murmurs two  
compass-billed sandhills into my ear.  
They shelter their sedge brood, comet  
trail their downy chicks behind them. *Keep*  
and then *quiet*, he whispers, and I resist  
my cackling song for as long  
as their leanness takes to pass.

When my son raises a hand-  
ful of spring water into summerlight,  
he calls forth another rain, the passage  
he shepherds me through. We watch  
the down drift into seed heads and catch  
hold. My son is the old man knuckling the back  
of my still-smooth neck skin. He keeps on  
pointing out the resourcefulness  
of sources, of the first and last birds  
in the book, of meadows and soil,  
how the first word inside us is always *wild*,  
how our way across the field is wings in air,  
is leaping, is lyrics to a song  
each body writes down in brushstrokes,  
faint and bold, onto the makeup  
of long-go, far-ahead stone.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> poem

#### The Sandhills

-- Linda Hogan

From *Sing: Poetry from the Indigenous Americas*, edited by Allison Adelle Hedge Coke, The University of Arizona Press, 2011.

The language of cranes  
we once were told  
is the wind. The wind  
is their method,  
their current, the translated story  
of life they write across the sky.  
Millions of years  
they have blown here  
on ancestral longing,  
their wings of wide arrival,  
necks long, legs stretched out  
above strands of earth  
where they arrive  
with the shine of water,  
stories, interminable  
language of exchanges  
descended from the sky  
and then they stand,  
earth made only of crane  
from bank to bank of the river  
as far as you can see  
the ancient story made new.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Poem

### Ghost in the Field

-- Matt Daly

One by one, sandhill cranes  
land in late season pastures scattered  
with harvest leavings. The structures we rafter  
together hem them in. Their sounds catch in our ears  
like husks of song. Their gestures linger  
as gracefully as passing dancers. The rush  
of their wings erases what we thought of  
as boundaries. There is much to fear  
and there are layers of evening  
we have not yet cluttered with our wants  
and our worries. Like red ribbons around our fingers,  
the cranes tarry, drawing us into the open  
beyond our autumn doors.

When only the night still  
listens, sandhills whisper of a ghost  
who sometimes travels  
beside them. The ghost, they tell, was often harried  
by fierce flocks of hands. Her feathers  
fell away as she fled to the edge  
of a starless sky and returned with a voice  
of water over stones. They say  
a silhouette resembling a human being  
stayed out until morning awaiting her, palms cupping  
white down. Whether it is the ghost herself  
roosting with the sandhills or only the first moonlight,  
we hear her voice let go her manifesto: all of us need  
the love we find in an open field.