

FOR KOHKUM, RETA

by Randy Lundy

Might as well settle
in a hard-heavy chair,
with a mug of steaming
green tea and some Powwow or
plainchant turned up loud.
Stare out the window
into the glare of sun glazing
the snowfield south of the house.

Remember the butter-glazed golden
crust of bread fresh from the oven.
Remember the oven door
creaking, heat blasting
your six-year-old face.

Your body's a canvas and bone lodge,
stone-glow hot in your belly

Low sun at noon falls lower.
Sparrows huddle at the feeder at dusk.

Tonight, a mile north of here,
a train engine will groan and then roar,
a biblical beast, a wihtikow come for the feast.

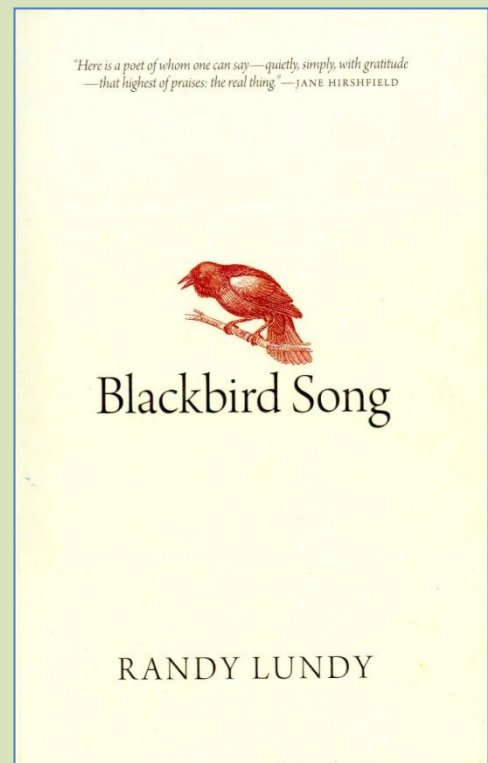
Memory is an uncomfortable skin.

Your mind like a sapling, bent,
curved like the earth.
Curved like a question mark.

Remember that woman.
It's always a woman
with white hands or brown hands.
The kitchen, mid-winter frost on the windows



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as you wait for the school bus,
that smell: yeast and wheat.
Love was it"
Birth?

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NOVEMBER OF YOUR FIFTIETH YEAR

by Randy Lundy

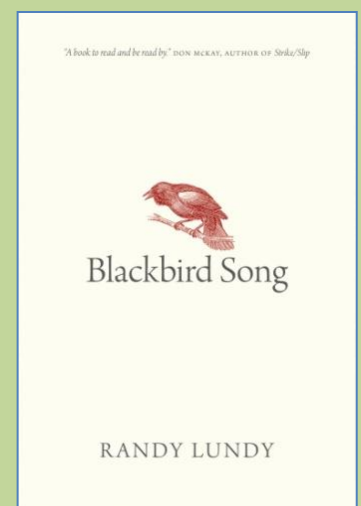
This light this morning is so uncanny—thin and grey; the air is stilled. The trees, even the last three leaves that cling to the ash, are motionless. If there is a sunrise beyond the cloud cover, it is weak, just enough to sulphur-tint everything. Is it the scent of brimstone to which the dog raises its nose? A cloven-footed creature stands just beyond your left shoulder, sucks the breath from your lungs. But you know the hungry ghosts and the wihtikows live inside.

It is as if, overnight, this world has ceased to be and become the next. But nothing ever ends. Take memory. It lives inside, too, not just in your mind, but in each cell, in the marrow of your bones. Even the stones, those grandparents, who have emerged in a kind of birth from beneath the snow in the warm front that arrived overnight, carry memories. They are not the blind eyes they seem. In their silence, they are remembering, thinking their way back through crust and mantle to the iron and nickel core.

They know you, that core and each stone. They exert an intimate gravitational pull on your body, as do the trees and the small, grey bodies of sparrows huddled there. Your body, too, tugs on all the



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ten thousand things, as if to wrap itself in a material embrace. Your heart tugs an inland tide beneath the ice in the lake twenty miles away. The seeds inside pine cones reach toward each other across the distance between northern prairie and your childhood boreal home.

When you were a boy, you could feel the wild rosebuds on the slopes of the slight valley that holds Cottonwood Creek pulling you south, toward the muddy, brown water and the muskrats you still watch swimming there in summer. A red tailed hawk hovers, holds its position in the high air. In this season and time, November of your fiftieth year, the young boy is still alive, wandering the banks of the Fir River fishing for pike, collecting palm-sized, water-smoothed stones to carry home in his pockets.

Blake was right, everything is infinite. Even the four-foot cut of birch trunk abandoned beneath the spruce at the west edge of the yard continues its life, though it is no longer adding rings, at least not as far as you can see. But maybe it's a fault in your looking. Look again. Look and listen. Try not to think. Try the meditation of heart-mind. If you listen closely you will hear the oxidized hinges on the doors of perception squeak, opening and closing, swinging an inch or two in the just-now rise of wind.