COLE SWENSEN

Shadow Puppets

42 BIRDS

Most shadow puppets are birds. This all depends on darkness.
Birds prefer darkness. Cockatoo, parrot, lark
have in common
you can see through them; a density based on ambient light. They must live
inside any number of things. Things without numbers. Name them:

And inside the body
of the thing that is shadowed
all require both hands, such as
two flying birds
two flying birds
the hands are more supple than the rest of the body
because they don't belong to it.

behind frosted glass

grief shape

the finger tracing laterally

across the back of a mirror as you might, walking down a street

let your fingertip trail along the pane

waist high the birds dissolve

brief lake

in the window of

reflect thereon. Therefore the

reflected sun. The wound in my hand

aches in weather, all weather, tattooed all

the way up to the elbow. Now it's winter. Birds cross in soft Vs, swift signs in ice. The people pointing, though some of them, actually, are waving.

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BIRDS

44 You'll need thousands of hands. Splay was first every finger split, dispersed; a bone can be

feathered this thousand driven hollow

into flock of all things numbered

one through one-hundred. Never was so asunder etc. so I closed the window. He shuffled the cards. Something frightened everything on the street.

ADVANCES IN THE FORM

The latest work in shadow puppets is being done on verbs. Make the form of a soar, of a veer. Make the tense clear. Distinguish the past perfect from the simple past. Neither was. And on into conditionals. Would have found, etc. Would have gone

myself, but I wasn't home. Birdwatchers often use sign language because, though birds are fond of the human voice, they are downright hypnotized by the swaying hands and will walk right into them.

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