



Soul Bird
Plagiarism
Subtext

R. A. Allen

Soul Bird

While driving on Haverhill Road
I noticed a bird flying apace alongside.
This gave me an ominous green chill.
Don't birds symbolize the soul?
Could this be the departure of *my* soul?
And the green of my chill seemed to be
the same radium green with which Lempicka
shrouded Depression-era Midtown in her Cubistic
New York (1930-35). And suddenly
I am on a window ledge thirty floors above Fifth,
preening my feathers in a nest made of litter
and twigs scavenged from Bryant Park,
and then some histoplasmosis-obsessed
asshole in sleeve garters reaches out and breaks my neck
with a flyswatter, and I flutter-flap down
into the honking canyon below, swept into
the gutters, washed into the storm drains; it's
blank obliteration for both me *and* my soul
gone quicker than you can say Eugène Ionesco,
which would indicate a perplexity
between the here and the now
between essence and existence
between being and Being—
metempsychosis notwithstanding.

Plagiarism

Lurking near a circle
Of aphoristic repartee
I read your
Thought balloon
Memorized it
Stretched it
Shaded it
To be mine own
(Virtually)
It's called
Reverse engineering
Hold up in any court
Like Velcro super glue

Subtext

You hear them
when the houselights go down,
when the pro's putt wobbles toward the cup,
when the sheriff holds the mob at bay,
and in their garbled crescendo that comes
before the skyrocket's crackling confetti.

But what, exactly, are they saying?
Certainly it's not just peas and carrots.
Surely it's more than mumbo jumbo.
An invitation, a warning?
Are they reading your tea leaves?
Or is it a prophetic riddle sent
to nag like an earworm
everlasting?



R. A. Allen

R. A. Allen's poetry has appeared in the *New York Quarterly*, *RHINO Poetry*, *Glassworks*, *The Penn Review*, *Amuse-Bouche*, *The Hollins Critic*, *Rendez-Vous*, and elsewhere. His fiction has been published in *The Literary Review*, *The Barcelona Review*, *PANK*, *The Los Angeles Review*, and *Best American Mystery Stories 2010*, among others. He has a Pushcart nomination for poetry and one fiction nomination for *Dzanc Books' Best of the Web*. He lives in Memphis and was born on the same day that the Donner Party resorted to cannibalism: December 26th.