

KATHERINE RIEGEL

About the Passenger Pigeon

How it lived in flocks of millions, huge black
clouds that lifted up, up like a reverse waterfall
and rolled down to settle in trees and onto the stolid ground.

Videos of starlings circle the web last year, this year,
and we gasp, we marvel, the great migratory flocks
like breathing, like swimming, sky schools,

moving mandalas. But passenger pigeons were even
more. More uncountable
than the individual hairs on a human head.
All those dreams pulled out in handfuls, plucked.

Perhaps it was like childhood: time was endless,
and then—

Katherine Riegel is the author of *Letters to Colin Firth* (winner of the 2015 Sundress Publications Chapbook Competition), *What the Mouth Was Made For*, and *Castaway*. Her work has appeared in *Brevity*, the *Gettysburg Review*, the *Offing*, *Orion*, *Poets.org*, *Tin House*, and elsewhere. She is cofounder and poetry editor of *Sweet: A Literary Confection*.

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