

[MJTM 25 (2023–2025) 160–64]

DARK DAYS THE MAGPIE BRINGS

Majorie Maddox<sup>1</sup>  
Commonwealth University, Lock Haven, PA, USA

I.

Maestro of sorrow,  
you survey Golgotha.

pre-thrashing rain,  
decisive thunder.

From the third to ninth hours,  
your throat bestows no serenade,

no comfort, no note of hope  
for that Creator crucified

beneath a sky, the dark  
shimmer of your indifference.

On this day, of all the birds  
you alone are silent.

Only when *It is finished*,  
does your harsh *ch-tak* echo

---

1. Marjorie Maddox is Professor Emerita of English and Creative Writing at the Lock Haven campus of Commonwealth University in Pennsylvania and is the author of numerous poetry collections including *Seeing Things* (Wildhouse, 2024).

centuries. You do not migrate  
to the tomb. Do not rise

to a horizon filled  
with dawn and song.

II.

And yet, an unrepentant thief,  
through time you keep stealing

all that glistens and glimmers  
as in Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra*,

when the innocent servant girl,  
also condemned for someone else's crimes

(yours), nearly plummets from the gallows.  
O dark deceiver—a stolen spoon clutched

in your beak, tailwinds of grief  
trailing behind you—confess

your larceny. Caw her name, *Ninetta*!  
For all this, I do not forgive you. Never

will I herald you sacred, never  
proclaim a flock of your kin good.

Even now, your red eyes track death;  
your purple feathers shine dirge.

*Dark days the magpie brings,  
dark days he sings.*

THE OTHER ONE  
—*THE FALLEN ANGEL*, ALEXANDER CABANEL, 1847

Majorie Maddox  
Commonwealth University, Lock Haven, PA, USA

Except for the eyes, he, too, is beautiful,  
maybe more so because he's so familiar,  
or so familiar to what we desire:  
the muscled limbs, the taut abs,  
the wild hair, the tear of regret,  
even the two clasped hands  
pushing against each other as if  
squashing, grinding, then recreating  
a miniature world which he'll pitch  
into the black hole of free will  
the second we choose to stop  
staring at his eyes,  
maniacal in their intense force  
to blast to smithereens all his creator's  
good intentions.

His auburn, slanted eyebrows—  
arrows that demand our attention—  
keep pointing past the sprawling vine  
and just to the right of our peripheral vision,  
so much so that we forget the raised wings  
and the calm pastel backdrop of celestial beings—  
the happy, obedient ones—joyfully gliding  
their way across a paradise  
that looks a lot like sky,  
like the one above me now,  
slowly sinking toward  
sunset and shadow.

NESTING DOLL

Majorie Maddox

Commonwealth University, Lock Haven, PA, USA

That small one inside another and another, another and  
another, rosy cheeks and blooming belly of the Russian

Matroshka doll. Or the Kelly Green family from Ireland:  
clan of wee leprechaun inside sister with clover between

her braids, inside brother with Aran sweater, inside  
mother in step dance dress and father with Irish

walking hat. Or the star-spangled elf hiding  
inside a toy maker, nestled safely inside

a round reindeer, then a fat snowman,  
a Mrs. Claus, and finally pot-bellied

Santa: nothing left to unscrew, no  
surprise identity to reveal, no

child to birth, just solid wood—  
at last—without elaborate

design or meaning, and  
not anything like the tiny

girl in kimono, lost  
from her larger selves,

and leftover from your  
childhood, Mother,

as she rests on the sill  
above my kitchen sink,

alone, revealing  
nothing, not

even a  
memory.