Three Ways to Look at the Balkans and not a Blackbird Among Them

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Forgetting is like so many birds that gather in huge flocks: dark shades, small, unfeathered and gone without individuation.

Some birds are not for forgetting. They lift off on wings heavy with memory, ravenous harpies disregarded at great risk.

1. an English Sparrow, thick beaked banged on the bathroom window. Peck, thpt, bang against glass of unlikely resilience. Peck, thpt, bang its dawn call Blagoevgrad, Melnik, Sandanski

2. a dovecote looked down on me boiling water, killing bacteria. Brown flaked panes a perch for the black, white, grey Doves silent before their open cote in the coal smoke of Bulgaria.

3. two Peacocks in an olive grove, Argos alerted, take abrupt flight just beyond Athena’s ruins whose temple archway still stands open to the encircling Aegean. This Greek island is Balkan, too.

There was another, nameless bird. It flew into my friend’s window. I do not know if it died. Maybe it was only stunned flying from Macedonia to Macedonia and still suffering in the Balkans.