



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Poem In Which Krishna Appears As a Heron

Marjorie Stelmach

Prairie Schooner, Volume 77, Number 1, Spring 2003, pp. 170-172 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/psg.2003.0034>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/41675>

## Marriage

March 19, Venus and Saturn in the sky  
make a trio with this slit of moon busy cradling  
the black ball of its unlit side. Astronomers describe

the moon as 30 minutes across, and the planets,  
a minute apart. So close, you could hold up a finger,  
blot them out, it would seem. So too a man

and a woman, moving through the space of their marriage.

*Marjorie Stelmach*

## Poem In Which Krishna Appears As a Heron

Lifting awkwardly, scattering beaded droplets to pocket  
the lake's pearl surface,

a heron not thirty feet from my door. Wings. White.  
My heart startled,

my flat palm pressed against air where the door swung away.  
And the replay: my entry,

blear-eyed, into another chilled dawn; the draw of my breath  
at the starched unfolding;

the muted crumple of space when the heron walked  
into air.

Once, driving fast in broad day, a deer – huge,  
in space and time's

drawn bead. The swerve and burn of tires, and for  
long minutes after,

the race of two hearts escaping one another. Does this sound  
like love to you?

The young immortals on their jet skis slice each other's wakes  
in tightening curves

and disappear, heading, may it be, for home docks, as lightning  
scores the sky.

Here in my doorway, I pray the storm in. Wind  
bellies the screens,

sieving the ozoned air. Krishna called memory *smṛti* – not,  
as I've always thought,

the linear tracings of one's own past, but the calling forth  
of latent impressions

left by those rare events that transcend our personal lives.  
Love, again?

Down across the lake sweeps a bodied wind. The lake-skin  
tarnishes in streaks

of black, and the sky purls white – a second coming of the crazed  
wake-cutting of the wild

young men. Improbable, this duplication – but a heron has come  
to feed at my shallows;

I know the translation of a god when I see one. *Sleep*,  
Krishna tells me.

*Sleep, and this will stay – in the rafters, in the sand – will come again,  
with something of the hollow*

*of your grave in its return.* Uniformly beaded now, my screen  
suggests  
a Hindu universe

of pearls reflecting pearls, in one of which a heron stands,  
feeding, ankle-deep

in me; a young doe, improbable, settles in the leaves.  
May these

impress the darkness. May the lake's soft pocketing last  
all night, as though

a curtain of herons were forever rising. May the blown sound  
of thunder and the imprint

of birdcall recur. May my heart lift awkwardly – like love?  
to bear their crossing,

my memory of them latent in their memory  
of me.