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The Bird Islands Off Englishtown, Nova Scotia

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The Bird Islands Off Englishtown, Nova Scotia

White foam leaps like bones flung to dogs. The skies
are bright this afternoon, and full of wings.
Rectangular rocks are scattered in the ocean
like boxcars from a primeval train wreck. On the waves
between our boat and a boxcar with a stone anvil on one end,
a guillemot's white wing patch stops the eye.

There's violence here. It starts with the argument
between the leaping of the sea and the stubborn
immobility of the rocks. From the sparse
grass on top of them, the air and ocean
are crosshatched with eagles' lines of sight.
Between those lines, puffins and kittiwakes bank and dart.

A puffin bobs on the surf, a bathtub toy.
As cormorants dry their wings in a comic dance
and seals in rotund rubbery bliss loll on low rocks
or ooze off them, the puffin soars, misjudges—
an eagle drops—and two black feathers spiral
onto the spitting foam.

Gaunt islands on wild water. On their spray,
the freezing, salty taste of our irrelevance
as humans. In this world, one engine drives
the light, the foraging winds, the waves, the wings.
At night, how feral, how demented the dark
between these rocks and the stars,
the orderly, pedagogically revolving stars.

Stephanie Kraft

STEPHANIE KRAFT is a retired newspaper reporter, now a translator of Polish literature, who lives in Amherst, Massachusetts. She and her husband, David, a retired psychiatrist, have spent vacations for 25 years on Cape Breton and have often visited the Bird Islands. Stephanie's poems have appeared in *Christian Century*, *The Prose Poem Project*, *Dappled Things*, *Cold Mountain Review*, and *Sky Island Journal*

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