

Pattiann Rogers

Night and the Creation of Geography

The screeching cries
of the killdeer in the night create
their own narrow channels through the blades
of broken grasses and sharp-edged
dunes lining the shore.

Likewise,
the nightjar's whistle cuts a passage,
like a stream, across the open desert.
Only the nightjar knows the stars
of that passage, just as the limpkin's
wail is a direction only the limpkin forges
through the marshlands.

The furrows
of the field cricket's triplet chirps and shrill
courtship trills transform the sorrels
and doveweeds in the ditch, fashioning
needle ways and grids of space by the run
of their own notes.

And the thin cough-bark
of the bobcat establishes another sparse and arid
stalk among the rocks and brushy land where
it roots and withers.

No one can fully explore
the corridor made through the dark by the coyote's
jagged shrieks and clacking yaps, those yelping
howls like sheer descending cliffs, a noise
jumbled like rock-filled gulches and gulleys.
None but the coyote.

On icy plains, the snowy
owl occupies the cavern of its own silence,
a cavern formed by its quest for sweet blood
of lemming or hare. Within the polished,
black-and-white crystals of the freezing
night air, the owl watches from the warm
hollow of its stillness.