



Amy Brakeman Livezey
Fall Count, 24" x 24"
mixed media on panel

Progress

Beyond the desperation diners of Butte
headframes dressed in black
ring of pallbearers around the casket
of the Berkeley Pit – waters 900 feet deep

acidic enough to dissolve a boat

acetic enough to dissolve a boat

Ten thousand snow geese, storm-driven
swirling down from the gun-metal sky

Before the pit, miners descended a mile deep
to blast and scrape the womb of the earth
June 1917, at full production thanks to the gift of war,
the fire takes two days to suffocate 168 miners
time enough to leave notes for those above:

*If anything happens to me you better sell the house and go to California.
We'll meet again, tell mother and the boys goodbye.*

Storm-driven, ten thousand snow geese
swirl onto the red water briefly turning it white

*There's a young fellow here Clarence Marthy,
he has a wife and two kiddies, tell her
we done the best we could but the cards were against us.*

The water recovers from the feathered respite
as thousands upon thousands of geese burn & die

*All alive but air getting bad, one small piece
of candle left, think it is all off.*

The open pit prevented such old-fashioned disasters
Progress that can be seen from space, the water level
rising ever closer to the groundwater of 30,000 people
and yesterday, a vee of snow geese drawn with a shaky hand
pass over my backyard heading roughly toward Butte

[Author's Note: Italicized lines were written by shift boss James Moore who saved six lives including that of Clarence Marthey (the correct spelling) but lost his own. From Punke, Michael. *Fire and Brimstone: The North Butte Mining Disaster of 1917.*]



Marc Beaudin is a poet, theatre artist and bookseller living in Livingston, Montana, dubbed "America's finest open-air asylum" for multiple reasons. His work has been anthologized in *We Take Our Stand* (edited by Rick Bass), *Poems Across the Big Sky II* and *Unearthing Paradise: Montana Writers in Defense of Greater Yellowstone*. His latest book, *Vagabond Song: Neo-Haibun from the Peregrine Journals*, was called "a jazzy, freewheeling, rollicking road trip into the beating heart of the Eternal Now" by *Montana Quarterly*. He believes the Brahms' Violin Concerto in D is more powerful than all the guns, smokestacks and coal trains in the world.

