

## Two Poems by Jeff Ewing

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### Fløyen

*from A Hundred Hardanger Tunes*

Here is where it will end, in the holes  
left behind by departing birds. Wings slapping  
like fish thrown ashore, songs falling away  
beneath the stone ledge jutting out stiff  
as a preacher's jaw—they trace the absences  
channeling his bones that whistle as  
birds' bones do, white flutes tuned to  
the facing wind. Around him schoolchildren  
jostle one another, heads down, jackets  
snapping—it's all part of learning where  
they end and the world out there begins.

This is the place, certainly, for that, the edge  
clearly visible, the consequences plain  
of ignoring the distinction. He must have  
learned it himself at some point, more  
than once. He recognizes the quiet of the time  
just before discovery, the lull of ignorance—  
some whispering, a high nervous laugh.  
The teacher—a woman in her thirties with  
buried eyes and red flashes in her hair  
on turning—snatches a boy back from  
the edge. He shakes himself angrily loose,  
curses her—knowing he's been robbed  
of something, but unsure yet just what.

The teacher's going to cry, Erling sees,  
then it will all be gone for good. He caws  
loudly once, flaps his black arms—  
the children laugh, and why not? All

birds are harmless, even those—crow, raven—  
presaging death. They are not themselves  
death, only its shadow preceding. Erling  
spreads his coat wide as the children watch,  
lets it fill with salt wind and their piping  
voices, reassured that he remains distinct—  
the still proud jaw, the aquiline nose—as their  
eyes fill slowly with the reflected horizon.

## **Aerial Work**

*from A Hundred Hardanger Tunes*

Standing eye-to-eye with the ocean  
is a lost man's vantage—crests streaked back,  
plumage shed—the bottom falls out—  
the feeling, remember, the hesitation at the top  
of the arc, bands of light dividing  
the falling from the yet-to-fall—it could  
be held, the girls believed, prolonged  
indefinitely if just the right angle were struck,  
if they were deserving—this from where?  
this belief that transcendence had to be coaxed—  
couldn't they see him reaching up, didn't they know  
they'd be caught long before the light left them—  
again and again they launched themselves  
toward the clouds gathering over the vidda,  
undoing the careless work of a thousand dead gods.

**Jeff Ewing** is a writer from Northern California. His poems, stories, and essays have appeared in *Sugar House Review*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Willow Springs*, *Crazyhorse*, *Saint Ann's Review*, and *Southwest Review*, among others. He lives in Sacramento, California with his wife and daughter.