Loren Eiseley’s “The Judgment of the Birds” (*The Immense Journey,* 1957) demarcates a trio of archaic encounters, each of which justifies the epitome of mankind’s allegorical connections with nature. In his essay, Eiseley introduces an anthropomorphic style that apprehensively rediscovers the often-overlooked symbolical connection between entropies of mankind and animals. Eiseley provides valuable insight into the experiences he shares in a series of four encounters with: the pigeons of ~~the void~~ Manhattan, an unsuspecting crow, a remorseless raven, and last but certainly not least he depicts a “heroic” (Eiseley 532) orb-weaving spider (whom he observed taking shelter from the cold October winds in a traffic light) Eiseley perturbs mankind’s daily dispositions as being lackluster and dull thus pejoratively adumbrating a metaphorical, emblematic essence that of which most entities of civilization (referred to as emissaries of the wilderness by Eiseley) may never be destined to witness. Eiseley wields each bird or group of birds with a well-equipped persona that not only bolsters the connection he shares with these extravagant critters, but also quenches mankind’s appetite for the anthropomorphic symbols pressed deep into a byproduct of an unfortunate tree nearly seventy years ago. As the story progresses Eiseley continues to commercialize evidence at a depleting rate, conscientiously comparing the meaning of these woebegone moments with his feckful interpretations. This irreconcilably defines an idiosyncratic interpretation of an experience that intentionally appears all too personal. Towards the end of Eiseley’s essay the reader is sufficed by Eiseley’s ironic methodology used to transcribe an encounter he has with the orb-weaver. Rather than stoically defining the symbolical meaning of his experience and what it’s representing to him, he chose an equitable, more egalitarianistic method to record the event. Eiseley suggests that “It was better, I decided, for the emissaries returning from the wilderness, even if they were merely descending from a stepladder, to record their marvel, not to define its meaning.” (Eiseley Page 533) Eiseley argues that it is better to record their marvel, rather than define its meaning, not because the emissaries definition of the meaning of the marvel is unsound, but because the symbolical elements of the marvel must be preserved in their utmost articulant and purest form, that of which is a record.

In the first scene Eiseley dolefully falls short of jumping into the “great bottomless void” (Eiseley Page 526) of his fog-ridden Manhattan hotel window. Figuratively speaking, Eiseley pusillanimously awoke in the darkest hour of the crow. He takes a gander out twenty stories into the New York skyline and catches a glimpse above and beyond what few men can perceive. He stood there motionless as if he were frozen in time, he neither blink nor abide his chest. As of this moment Eiseley doesn’t exist within the human realm. Physically, he is unmoved. However symbolically, his shadow dances a dance of courage, moving darkness into the fog-shielded world beneath him. Eiseley’s shadow cannot be touched, and it will always be in the world beneath his indefatigable glare out into the yonder. He felt as if no nerve, nor cell coinciding within his soul contained even the faintest presence of fear as he stood out there on the edge of his windowsill.

Eiseley catches glimpse of the tip of wings glistening off into the dense fog. Throughout World War I and World War II, carrier pigeons were entrusted with information that had significant impacts on the outcome of both world wars. Thankfully due to the craftsmanship of their circumnavigation, we can continue to give credit to their brother, the bald eagle. Fore can one depict the bald eagle serving our country in silence? As an onlooker we envision Eiseley leaning out of a window into the chill of a cold October wind, he appears to be hypnotized by the swift movements of the pigeons dancing in the fog. Eiseley was amidst their world and on the edge of ours. With just one heroic leap of faith he could join the pigeons in holy matrimony, until death to they part with an un-formidable result. Every molecular composition in his middle-aged body wanted to partake in the same final crusade a newborn bird experiences in preparation for their first heroic leap of faith.

*“Pweshh!”*

Out of nowhere an unexpected visitor flies within inches of his head and blows his hair back, pure pandemonium erupts out of a horrific screech emitted by an unearthly creature. This is not the sound in which an ordinary crow is capable of making, but it does serve as a good transition where Eiseley begins to diminish the record of his scene. He instantly changes to an upbeat emblematic tempo, searching for an explanation as to why the crow caused such uproar. If you hadn’t read the story, what might you’ve considered to be the cause of the crows screech? Generally, most answers will deviate from Eiseley’s explanation, but the description of the scene remains intact. For instance, you would have a difficult time trying to argue that Eiseley’s “The Judgment of the Birds” doesn’t take place in New York. This is due to the clear evidence mentioned multiple times. This is indeed the case, “New York is not, on the whole, the best place to enjoy the downright miraculous nature of the planet.” (Eiseley, Page 526)

When the question is asked amongst entropies of the human civilization, the explanations for the crow’s erroneous behavior will vary to that of Eiseley’s. One person might think the Crow was trying to save his life, while the other could agree with Eiseley. The fact that this particular scene took place in New York is a perfect example of concrete evidence.

A record is a function of an experience or series of events. When you have an irrefutable record of an experience, you should have a concrete description that accurately portrays the experience. With this record (the output), we must be able find the inverse of the record. While this is defined only theoretically, the inverse can be a reenactment of the experience or series of events. If the reenactment is an exact replica of the actual event, then we cannot refute the claim with the given evidence. It is important to note that this doesn’t mean that our reenactment was an exact replica, but to the best of our knowledge, and the limited amount of evidence given we can’t disprove the theory or state that the reenactment was a fluke. Generally in order for the record to be proven, it must be understood as a statement of fact by all parties involved.

Symbolic definitions are derived from inconsistences of the record, theoretically speaking; they could be represented as the derivative of the record function. In the second paragraph I described the scene in which the episode with the pigeons took place. This is just one of many ways in which Eiseley purposefully introduces refutable logic into the beginning of the story. When we wish to define what a particular event, symbol, or phrase symbolizes to us as an individual, we must realize that we’re portraying our interpretation of that symbol onto others.

This can be conveyed through newspapers, television commercials, and nowadays even in the backseat of a taxicab. This coincides with Eiseley all the way back in the fifties, “His great news services, his world-wide radio network, he knows with a last remnant of healthy distrust will be of no use to him in this matter. No miracle can withstand a radio broadcast, and it is certain that it would be no miracle if it could.” (Page 525) Consider the media portrayal of particular objects in the world today. In order to escape the modern-day propaganda, Eiseley suggests seeking a natural revelation in the wilderness. The reason being is because majority of todays symbols are already defined.

So we must begin our quest to find the raw or pure and unmodified original records of the delicacies that belong to nature. We commonly forget that we are indeed only a mere species of this graceful planet. Take careful note to try to re-discover the elaborate message hidden within these lines: “In that way it would go echoing on through the minds of men, each grasping at that beyond out of which the miracles emerge and which, once defined, ceases to satisfy the human need for symbols.” (Eiseley, Page 533)Hidden within this excerpt is advice to those whom had experienced a miracle and wish to share it with others. From the initial starting point in the story we see signs that suggest Eiseley is in search of a symbol of courage. It is most visible within the first episode where he encounters the crow. Towards the end however, he realized that it is very likely that someone else in the world may be in search of a different sign or symbol, It can range from hope to purpose, love to peace, or anything else a person can conceptualize. Why should we limit a definition of a miracle strictly to “courage”? This prohibits other people from associating their own symbol or meaning to a particular event. If you were in Eiseley’s shoes, would you not agree that it would be wrong to define that this spider is a symbol of courage and a symbol of courage only. Eiseley attributes the word “heroism” with courage in this particular experience he has with the orb-weaver. “Nevertheless it brought the birds back into my mind, and that faraway song which had traveled with growing strength around a forest clearing years ago - a kind of heroism, a world where even a spider refuses to lie down and die if a rope can still be spun on to a star.” (Eiseley Page 532)However, who’s to say what a particular reader might associate or symbolize heroism with? Can it only be associated with courage, or is it possible that there may be somebody that attributes the word heroism with an alternative? Eiseley declares that the human mind is a very remarkable thing: “The mind, it came to me as I slowly descended the ladder, is a very remarkable thing; it has gotten itself a kind of courage by looking at a spider in a street lamp” (Eiseley Page 533) “But as I hesitated, it became plain that something was wrong, the marvel was escaping”(Eiseley Page 533) This marvel was escaping the basic human need for symbols, this provides an answer to our initial question as to why Eiseley bothered to define his personal interpretation of his events to the reader, even if it resulted in him breaking his own logic.

Eiseley’s reasoning for his method of choice to document his experience with the orb-weaver and my discovery of Eiseley’s strikingly coincidental explanation that marks him as a hypocrite, but it appears as if this was his intent. If it were not for the hypocritical methods used to document these events we may not have been able to fully understand the interpolation of this event with all of the other events in the story. Consider when Eiseley is describing his experience with the crow: “Around and around went the wings. It needed only a little courage, only a little shove from the window ledge to enter that city of light.” (Page 527) Does this not correspond with Eiseley’s courageous symbolical interpretation of the orb-weaver? Consider his admiration of the human mind once more: “The mind, it came to me as I slowly descended to the ladder, is a very remarkable thing; it has gotten itself a kind of courage by looking at a spider in a street lamp. Here was something that ought to be passed on to those who will fight our final freezing battle with the void.”(Eiseley Page 522) This directly corresponds with himself, Eiseley seems to not only be talking about the human mind, but Eiseley is talking about **his** mind. Eiseley describes how his mind has gotten a form of courage, which in the quote from the excerpt describing his experience with the crow: “Around and around went the wings. It needed only a little courage, only a little shove from the window ledge to enter that city of light.”(Eiseley Page 527)He admittedly informs the reader that he was in need of a sign of courage, and with that symbol, he could enter that city of light. Afterwards, he coincides to get dressed and proceed with his day. This explains that Eiseley apparently was in need of a little courage that morning, thus the crow provided.

Does this also correspond with Eiseley’s experience in the Badlands? I leave this for the reader to decide, for I cannot allow myself to define what one should associate with a particular event. It is also possible that I’ve made a mistake, and I’ve been misguided in my search for an answer as to why Eiseley contradicted himself. Then again, maybe I’m contradicting myself merely just by agreeing with Eiseley. The moral of the story is that I am just a man, and all that is of mankind requires symbols.

**Works Cited**

Eiseley, Loren "The Judgment of the Birds." *The Norton Book of Nature Writing*.

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