

KATE WELSH

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## HOMING

An ornithologist tells me that all birds have a keel, a bony protrusion from their breastplate on which their wing muscles anchor,

offering leverage for flight. *Keel* as in a ship's first foundation, as in what keeps everything righted: stability in the waves, the air,

in the surprise innate in both. Only recently I came to understand that messenger pigeons don't know how to go anywhere but home.

Taken away from their coop, they orient solely towards what is familiar, returning again and again, relentless in their want for what they know.

Not travelers, then; not seekers. Despite their wings: rooted. For months last year, I had a new address every week. And now:

a set nest, my own slippers by the door, a plant I must water. On the molting oak outside — *my* tree, I've claimed it — a small crew

of tiny Odysseuses stop to rest. I welcome them.