

BESTIARY

(found poem)

Michael Taekens

Wild yellow irises.
Beautifully weathered
skull with parts
jaggedly missing. Strip
the calcium phosphate
and the bones become
flexible—enough so that
one can literally tie them
in knots. 128,000
pairs of legs
had been turned in
for bounty. And they
lived, and stood upon
their feet, and exceedingly
great host: snail shells,
clams, turreted seashell,
crinoids, coral, deer
pelvis, thimble-sized
mouse skull. How I bore you
on eagle's wings and brought
you unto myself. Crushed
and finely ground, used
as feed for stock, as fertilizer,

and as a nutritional
supplement for humans. They
can assess which threats
are real, which are not,
and respond accordingly.

Their bones dissolve
until at last the creature
is floating, Precambrian,
unicellular: trickster, earth
mother, hag, journey,
flying saucer, lock
and key. Plumes. Purple
mountains' majesty. Bone
black—a fine charcoal made
by burning animal bones
in closed containers, used
in refining sugar. they
sheltered themselves from
the rain under fresh skins. My
country 'tis of thee, sweet
visage duplicated on seals,
coins, quilts, totem poles,
mastheads, buffalo hides,
weather vanes, flagpoles, Boy
Scout ribbons and post office
doors. Most eighteenth
century Americans had seen
an eagle. Such indifference
is the eagle's usual policy.