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State Forest

Every free man shall have the eyries of hawks, sparrowhawks, falcons, eagles and herons in his woods, and likewise honey found in his woods....

– from *The Charter of the Forest*, 1217

We sit in the rain-charged brook, shoulder to shoulder, dimply skin on skin, placing and replacing stones, with each move fine-tuning the tone and pitch just downstream, adding our liquid notes to the blowdown song of snags and cairns and easy flow. This should go without saying: this music, the grave and gravelly banks, bed of stacked and tumbled rocks. Water with its memory and prophecy of ice. Granite. Blood-brown steel staining a concrete boulder from last century's bridge. July, and a maple leaf already turned, red, a desperate raft. A great blue heron stands upstream. He shares this world with us. I close my eyes to picture the pool where he wades: there, a speckled trout pulses, balanced in sunlight, waiting—startles too late in the shadow quick-sprung from above: I open my eyes to the splash; it's the heron—the fish in its beak—lifting off, pumping wide and slaty wings, tucked neck and pushing—look!

The Belletrists

Storrs, Connecticut

We walked down into this valley and, I swear, straight into Keats' "To Autumn" where *full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn*. I listen to the words tumble like apples from your lips: ...*and fill all fruit with ripeness to the core*. Your full lips again: ...*to swell the gourd and plump the hazel shells...* and the rosy-hued land darkens from the west. The poet, like us, walked to feel his blood, to pass through his breath hanging in the air. But you remind me that *mellow fruitfulness, twinéd flowers, and last ooziings*—all the ripening towards death—burst forth loaded with his grief for the slaughter in St. Peter's Field: women and men, hands up high, run through with bayonets, trampled, crushed a month before the harvest moon rose—the one that rises now, swollen, bright, as implicated as *gathering swallows*, while workers fall

The Burden Note



“Every Night & every Morn
Some to Misery are Born.
Every Morn & every Night
Some are Born to sweet delight.
Some are Born to sweet delight,
Some are Born to Endless Night.”

– William Blake

No NATO: Chicago, 2012

for Miles

You wait until you've crossed the Ohio River to call your mom and let us know you're on the bus with a raucous crew: red-clad nurses, furious Buddhists, audacious brats without a clue who Guy Fawkes was but still don his face and fierce sense of justice, a couple of Catholic Workers, and a contingent of Total War vets, ready to chuck their medals in Chicago where a few thousand will march a loop through the streets past Haymarket Square to call bullshit at the gathering leaders of NATO and Capital. You've got five bucks, you say, and there are donuts and bottles of water; you'll be fine, and why didn't we ever take you to the Midwest when you were a kid. The country—the land—is beautiful, and do we remember your imaginary brother Peter who lived in Ohio? Now brothers-in-blue all across America keep their clubs on their belts, freeing their hands to take aim with holographic sight-equipped M4 carbine rifles and go hauling ass down Main Streets in armored personnel carriers. Nobody's fucking around anymore and you *are* black—or black enough. Plus, you have a real younger brother back here who wants you to come home. At the demonstration, you come within a foot of being run down by two cops (the driver's black and the white cop rides shotgun!) gunning their SUV into the protester-clogged street, probably frustrated at two days of this crap, sending one blonde dreadlocked guy toppling up and sprawled across the windshield. That night, camped out on the sidewalk, the John Hancock Center rising above you into smeared sky, you think about that close call: the guy was all right but those cops: they were kids once! You look up at winking office lights, a few stars, and try to get this straight: children are plucked up out of projects, transformed into storm troopers, sent back to stomp out hope on the same streets that nearly killed them, and ordered to protect the most powerful men in this world, the world they help make safe for those men to bomb—north to south, Atlantic to Pacific to the middle of continents. This Occupy thing just might take a while

American Guzzle

Gasoline rainbows the gutter. You've made a scene. Hot as a habanero for water, milk, a black and honeybee yellow Hummer, gulp Dr. Pepper,

propel yourself, ballistic, through the day. Back home: crank some heat: the furnace—its oracular thrum. This land is yours, peppered,

tased, fracked, stunned. Stake out the borders. Raze the old house, kick the sick bums to the boroughs, furrow your brow. Sergeant Pepper

and the Lonely Hearts Club Band makes you want to cry *oh, life was so much simpler then!* Not salt or cocaine sprinkled with your pepper,

not asbestos: a nostalgic stiff whiff of anthrax, children's bones blown across the zero ground of drone attacks. Now consider *pepper*:

what a swell word—so perky, so irrepressible—like *zipstrip*, *fump* or *Gipper*, like *spangled* or *weddingparty*, like *pumped*, *pep* or

yessir. Elections quicken your pulse like a dog whistle shrill in everybody's ears. You're a statistic, a blip in a patriotic pep-per-

person survey. Hey, Andersen: wake up from your nightmare! Go stumbling toward the garden for gleaming tomatoes, beans, peppers

For Berta Cáseres

who led the struggle to save the Río Gualcarce, Honduras
March 4, 1971 – March 3, 2016

I first learn of your life in the news of your death, so by the time I discover *The Mother of All Rivers*, this brief documentary like a deep bright pool, by the time I hear your voice gliding over jump cuts (boulders rolling and hopping down into the dusty roadblock, clouds parting over dark green peaks like hands first concealing, then revealing a face); by the time I hear you explain *we denounced this dam and were threatened with smear campaigns, imprisonment, and murder*; by the time I see Tomás Garcia, smiling in his white cowboy hat, move into slow-mo, then his coffin bobbing between pallbearers; by the time the film ends on the now agonizing high note of you, in profile, a strong current churning past, you are dead. Who were the assassins? What day could not be won by your wide open face, open eyes lit up like those of the girl you used to be? You remind us that in the misty spray, in the cosmology of your people, girls are never victims, will never be caught running away or into the arms of soldiers: they guard the quick-bending frothy uprush of Río Gualcarce—without them, and in this life, not myth, without you, the river would only tumble so far down from the mountains, would never reach the boy standing at the outcrop poised to dive, or the corn doing its whispery little dance in the field, the steaming pot, the work clothes dunked and wrung. In the film, you talk and gesture, march alongside the pickup trucks, banners waving above fists and shouts on the long road to the capital. Berta: I want to be hidden in a shadow the night they broke into your home, burst out to shoot them before they shoot you: I have never killed anyone but I swear—or I'd like to believe—I'd gun them down to see your life break through that moment and go on carving the way for us to follow. And yes, my sister, I know that this is just helpless man thinking, that the water rolling along means your life was an imperative for us to look ahead to the next turn, singing. But here you are, drinking coffee with your mamá, here you are insisting: *we are only human; of course we have real fears, but that doesn't mean we are going to be paralyzed by them* and I want to jump into the film as into swift water to save you, you who saved the river

Augury of Innocence

One summer night on the mountain
we sit with my father who is still handsome
but red-faced and thin-armed
with Agent Orange Parkinson's, fatigued
from tremor and trauma-wracked sleep—
and watch high-def coverage of boys
shipping out for first and second and third
tours of duty, fist-bumping on the heat-
wavy tarmac as cool ozone blows
into the living room through gauzy curtains.
Enough! Enough! We were just kids, my god!
Dad bellows, we all jump, his namesake
little Kit in his lap, crying out.
When I was maybe four or five or six at the most
I squirmed out of my father's arms
to watch the maple seeds grow wings and fly
twirling in their descent
like helicopters.
Also, like people falling
out of helicopters