

POEMS OUT OF PLACE

River Grass

quickwater *n.* The part of a stream that has a strong current.

— www.merriam-webster.site

I peer off the gunnel of my canoe
through panes of fluid glass, clear
to blades of grass two-feet down.
Each lean strand's an undulation
over the coarse sand. Every clump
sunlit is doubled for its squid-shadow,
wriggling black on tooth-yellow gravel.
Being strong and laminar, the flows force
the filaments parallel with the gradient,
obliged to current, the expedient to which
they, and I, must hew. Even as the day
waned and darkens and the river slows
and deepens, and the green oscillation,
though still below, fades from view, I
steer to stay the runnel, our common
course of travel.

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Summary Judgment

“The highest that we can attain
is not knowledge, but sympathy
with intelligence.”

—Thoreau, “Walking”

Whether the crow’s agitation
is self-referential or intimates
a reciprocal relation between
it and me, there is, I see,
elation of a sort on its part,
else on mine an absurd
if tender over-cogitation
on a bird, now become doubt.
Or if solely one crow’s egoism
versus one boor’s solecism,
each species owes equally
for its misinterpretation
of the other creature’s heart
and, as with certain mates,
things even out.

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Tin Mountain Sun

When it comes up this time of year, the sun
hits *just* twixt Tin Mountain and Doublehead.
Its first sweep is a single ray, tip-lighting
the near hill, thence to creep and trickle-trip
northwest along the hardwood divide that cleaves
everything beneath the spruce-line. For bearing
no leaves, the early-sunned branchlets lick, twitch,
flit bare against the nickel sky, so to tickle
it and irritate the gods of morning.

As if to chide, the deities reply only with a puff
of scarcely lit vapor too thin to stay, a molecular
mingle that dissipates as it must—aborning—
in a cloud-mist fluff and dull flare. Yet this
tedious diaphany bequeaths my guileless
epiphany of the day: I rest my forebearing
that what's a fickle seep of sun might instead
fiercely pour headlong in, odds-on the residual
wet-chill done in a nick. "Begone," I'd say,
and so be on my way.

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Two-Timing an Egg One-Handed

Step One, Coddle:

Aware you cradle a fragility,
cup an egg, long axis upright,
parabolic ends rested
conformably in the concavity
of your palms.

The lightness enclosed there,
a life germ of minor gravity,
is blessed for the snug cage
of your ten fingers opposed,
no matter in doctrinal prayer
or secular supplication, both
applications being balms.

Or merely the zygote feels caressed
for your honoring its fertility,
as to midwife the gestation,
warm an embryo to term,
nurse issue toward natural age.

Step Two, Execute:

One-handed, now, hook two fingers
over the egg's greater dome, crook
thumb under the lesser. Smartly strike
equator against a soup bowl lip.
As object hits rim, retract
your encircling digits, roll
and thrust convexly forward
the corresponding pads
of your palm—a supple pip
applied mid-shell—to divide
a oneness in halves,
whose silken extract
(a cool extrusion,
a funhouse-mirror drip
of liquified tissue)
slinks in lustrous dumbness
into its brief home.

The hollowed apses your fist retains
resemble a well-shucked bivalve

whose hinge remains
though the shape's inexact.

Calcic platelets float astride
their yolk-and-white mantle,
mini continents on tectonic goo.
These you push aside as scrim
(or, less easily, they're plucked),
for purity's sake an exclusion.

Dump the clarified
mucilage intact
into the snapping skillet,
the ovum instantly fried:
your first kindnesses
to its prior wholeness
by your last deeds belied.

#

Out of Place

“Heaven gives its glimpses only to those
not in position to look too close.”

—Robert Frost, “A Passing Glimpse”

The early sun shone on a spotted shape,
a light-brown nestling thing in an off-
trail nook. The form, alone on the ground,
was warm in the pearled dew, softly
respiring. It was screened in a brake,
a drape of grass I'd drawn back a bit
(a smidgeon-sin my own so to see a
rarely seen sinlessness). Having had
my look—borne witness—bent low as I
could, I let slack with care the green
curtain and turned around from there,
desiring to take leave of a wordless
wood, quiet as a curled fawn.

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