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EXTENSIONS OF THE GHOST

Spring encroaches in its dark & sticky glory. Inverted beneath bell-tones of sky the river pretends it makes its own moon every night, a soft cloth.

In the hollow places an awakening, as if a drug had been inserted between the mattresses of a sleeping architect & the buildings he dreams of.

I take a back way along the railroad tracks in order to watch the crocuses infiltrate yet another vacant lot. Along the tracks, evidence crews have been replacing the ties. The earth is darker, scuffed, oily where they've labored.

The train glides against the river the way a hose full of water glides against the underpointing of a nineteenth-century farmhouse.

When we say *desire* we are really making an argument for the intolerable haecceity of everything outside our own bodies: river, egret, sympathy. The architect turns & mumbles in his sleep.

Dither & crush, the body's brined falconry. As we lose diacritical marks they are reincarnated: as children? orphans? poets?

Paperwhite, skunk cabbage, a path through what we call "park." Gesture of a core towards its periphery. The great clock of the natural affections begins to lay out its silverware of basswood & walnut, sparrow & teaberry.

We exist within an imbrication of usages & buildings. The hands begin to make languages of their own until we give them something else to do.

What we call nature is a test nature itself proctors, to a cruise ship full of blind photographers. Train : birds :: river : _____ . *Landscape* as direct(ed) motion, act of appetite. Perspective/consumption. Of will.

KILLING JAR

The brain has a structure like an ethnologist, the experts on honey & wintergreen assure us, decked out in Bermuda shorts & strap-on chandeliers that glitter in the reflected light the blind fritillaries of death bear up from the supple wheatcake of the body's paper throne. The body keeps asking just what this experiment is, and the mind replies with something that is half-rose, half-architecture, a philosophy of the senses upon which the brain embarks as a sort of Fulbright, investigating folk medicines among the local highland tribes. The mind makes an argument for classification & immanence, but the body, having grasped the intuitive acoustics of ambient space, begins to dance slowly in rhythm with the cursive looping of the insects, each ferrying its crumb of dark matter to the long tables where the experts sit, weighing, examining, scratching notes in their spidery ledgers. The brain, aglow now in the thickening domestic interior of its century, files report after report with the endocrine glands, the pancreas, the great muscles of the buttocks & thighs. The mind thinks "hydrogen." The body says "hydrogen." The brain records the curious dances of the locals, the vegetable passions they pass on to their children, the rituals of possession & exchange. Dusk encroaches; a chill creeps in; the darkest insects swarm. The brain tries writing a letter home, to husband, mother, wife, but claimants keep getting in the way, an endless procession of dauphins & pretenders. Each tries on the body as if it were a slipper made of glass. Each departs in disappointment for some more effectual kingdom.

NOT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OUR NATIONAL PARKS

Turned head juxtaposed with thorn. Haloing effect of recorded motion, an encrustation, as of gratitude or salt. Enigma of where to place one's eyes: in landscape? on a plate?

In the sense that salt stains, vision also. Imagine the sea as a sort of repository for what trees can never be. In its sleep (to the extent that trees sleep, to the extent that existence for a tree is a variety of sleep, can be classed as sleep) the forest mimics the sea.

To know which kind of tree is dreaming by the taste of salt on its leaves: thrust of head from torso, of tongue from mouth. Birds do it.

Haptic connection. In some versions a childhood prank (warm water, warm hand). In others a folk meme, frozen flagpole, patriotic salute gone midwinter awry.

Drunk with wine the old king awaited a woman for his pleasure. Creak of the tent pole in the night-whistling air.

Later, texture of blood in sand. The iron in the blood always its own excuse, like to like.

Weaving among the darkening trunks the sap collector likes to imagine himself a spy, which is to say a functionary charged with vision. Never bothering to wonder which side he is on.

The forest, on the other hand, dreams the sap collector as an itch it cannot scratch. An alarm clock. A child crying in another room, at some distance from the bed where you toss.

Some agents of the body sleep along with the body, others don't. The heart is the largest muscle that never sleeps, therefore never dreams.

To place a forest on a flag is to pledge treason to the idea of blood, is to tell a story in which only one woman ages. Children gathered around foxfire in winterdark.

We assume that the forest, sleeping, is blind, because we sleep with our eyes shut.

The human heart is what the forest dreams it will become in the moment of its waking, not knowing this office is already held by the sea. In this way

a great battle is perpetually postponed.

Promontory Point: the old king dies, again and again. Sap smudged copper-red in the plastic taps.

How many forests does it take to dream a flag, a hand, a country?

The forest is but one of the many unused muscles of the sea, to which the eye calls in its twinned ontology. The dialects of salt multiply. In six fields a single seedling burns.