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Brown-bodied, forward-thrusting, in and out of a hillside’s undergrowth, they Egypt-walk: three strutters, after rain syncopating to jazz from a kitchen window—Carlos Santana’s “Smooth”—as they inch onto lawns to pluck first-shoot grasses.

Unhurried as heat, these have come down past surveyors’ stakes, past deer-printed mud, between a wrecked ship of V-ed oaks initialed by lovers. Having taken time into account, they are timeless and present as in a drawing by Audubon or a field guide; each blatant bird emblematic of species. One displays, trills, at tangential scent or threat. Maybe I seem less predator than curiosity-white-robed, behind a scrim of screen—but I’m watched with more than passing interest. Maybe seeing is believing to a turkey and it helps to be standing as still as this rinsed-perfect summer air. Still, my backlit shape must be more startling than God’s: They move off in a pattern resembling an S, having surveilled the treeline like operatives in service of whatever secret causes the biggest one to shake as if flesh were burdensome in any light.

by Roy Bentley

Roy Bentley received a National Endowment for the Arts Grant in Poetry for 2001-2002, and he recently won the National Looking Glass Chapbook Award for Reparation, available from Puddinghouse Press in Ohio.