

Hovering in One Place

In mid morning
the summer fragrance of yarrow in mist
drew us from Mendocino to Big Sur, far above
the sound of the Pacific—the sea and the highway.

During those long days, the swells of the tidepools
attracted our sense of wonder as anemones and starfish
hugged the watery world of rock and sea for miles along
the coastline.

In those days people walked and spoke more quietly,
some flew kites in the beach breezes;
occasionally, some said hello and pointed out a path to take above the coast highway.
The pure air filled our lungs and we felt connected to this part of the world.

Now nearly three decades later, living 2500 miles to the east,
we plant seedlings of American Sycamore and Green Ash this year,
and maybe pine and spruce next year. It is only a semblance of wilderness
and only a small and temporary influence that we offer.
Was it this isolation we sought in coming this way? Walking alone
on these few acres in the Midwest, caring for a small plot of land
for the time that we occupy it, we await the arrival of Canada Geese,
stopping to rest in the pond, not knowing if their winter
habitat in the south will be there for them next year or the year after.

The butterflies will soon have no place to stay in Mexico, their forested homes burned out or cut
down. Another rare primate has gone extinct in Ghana—forever. The forests are quiet and
the parks are noisy with people.

Sometimes in the quiet morning I hear the hummingbird hover at the butterfly bush, then dart
over to the zinnias. A green-black iridescent flicker in the sunlight, life on another scale, its
meteor metabolism racing while it stands still for a drop of nectar.

I think I know what it is to work hard and tread water, to stand still and try to stay balanced.