

FIELD GUIDE
A TEMPO

Henry Walters

The Hobblebush Granite State Poetry Series, Volume IX

HOBBLEBUSH BOOKS
Brookline, New Hampshire

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HOBBLEBUSH BOOKS

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*to you long-gone nameless minstrels, gleemen, balladmongers,
who trebled your troubles for nothing & nobody at a crossroad*

*& to you ever-living Happy Hoosiers, singing your authorless
songs into a hard-of-hearing tape recorder & one another's ear*

& to the threefold snow-angel with the stolen violin under her chin

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*Suppose I try to describe faithfully the prospect
which a strain of music exhibits to me. The field
of my life becomes a boundless plain, glorious to
tread, with no death nor disappointment at the
end of it. All meanness & trivialness disappear.
I become adequate to any deed. No particulars
survive this expansion; persons do not survive it.
In the light of this strain there is no thou nor I.
We are actually lifted above ourselves.*

—THOREAU

~

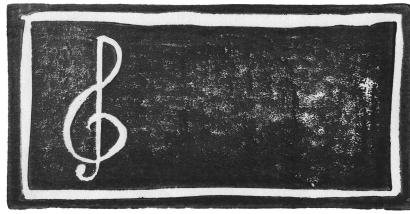
*Ourselves in the tune as if in space,
Yet nothing changed, except the place . . .*

—STEVENS

~

*This will prove a brave kingdom to me,
where I shall have my music for nothing.*

—STEPHANO, THE TEMPEST



DA CAPO

Reader, there's something I wish you could see, which you may not. It's very small, & its jar is large, like one waxwing in the loose weave of the sky. But I have no power to magnify. What I have to show I show you from afar, the field of view, in full: spruces shading out one side, a mill-stream changing pace along another, hoofprints in step with foxes following on the furthest edge. I can show you the lepidopterist with his long white net, the erratic leaps & lunges of his chase. The course he follows is a guessing game, the fugue of another, that of the thing he's after, a flying object, grace-note, winged erratum, unidentified, the score you are forbidden to see, & the seal upon his brow & upon this book.

SAW INSTRUMENTAL

Rathlin Island

Across the handsaw drawn—as across the world
now seems—her fiddlebow—a whetting, whittling down
to two dimensions—a plane edge-toothed as ocean's own—
horizon-fretted—wind aslant a treeless (I would
have you listen to it) island—back/forth—(how, o
dare I, how to tell you?)—Ariel—(slit-bound)—
as once your forefinger set a wine glass humming—bone-
less, lungless sprite fast in the cloven pine-rings wailed

& bent his pitch (how high?) within that windbent tree—so
that night her saw—sighting, aligning, sliding between—
shrieked out (& never cross the grain) the Lilliputian
stars—made of the room, walls, floorboards, table, us, a mouth—
an echo chamber—until we heard our worldsend through
the crack-(my heart)(she played Amazing Grace)-less distance.

AFTER ARIEL

Assembling anything this delicate,
dismantle
your material
resources. As in, push back (lightly, lightly)
the marble
statue's cuticles
till crescent moons come rising up below.

As in, see the lunatic soaking Lear undo
his buttons
to make wind-openings.

As in, give fire holes for its alchemy.

As in,
our maple syruping
will take all day, boiling, bottling, giving away.

As in, mind how memorable magic is
its own
timely disappearance,
how, when you look to the clock in the theater,
gone
are its two slight hands.

As in, before us, suddenly birds of the air

take off, lightly, lightly, their marrowless
fluted bones
a feathered skeleton
cage that frees them. It is them, as a churchyard angel
is stripped-down stone,
a naked simpleton
flight of silent fancy, worn by the rain.

My ear's alembic wants a whoosh of flame
to distill
one miracle
from the rest: solstice-speck of a kestrel rising
like sap in a maple,
dawn-red decibel
with all its fingers hidden in the wings.