

Vines

Stop sap

entwining the trunk, grow forty
rings, six inches thick,

the vines take trees down
left along long enough,
limb-breaking heavy tangle

hauling itself into the canopy
of oak and cottonwood both.
Hard orange berries

lighting the woods for the birds
to eat the seeds, ready them
for sprouting in their flyover's waste.

Saw them tight to the ground,
poison the roots through the stumps,
cut them as high as you can reach,

let every thick rope fall to harvest,
until you are drenched in the juice
living up to the species name,

Asiatic Bittersweet,
until you're not native either.
They swing down empty from the sky,

another crop sprouts below
and the trees are freed to make more buds,
more sweet than bitter for a time.

Territory

The accent of crows
reveals destination
not origin
the caws up in the stark branches
deflated into drowsy quacks
cut from an ill wind on a cloudy day they keep trying
to warn off a trespasser
from territory that was never theirs
cawing back and forth
one to another
get thee to thy thuggery
but they can't

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Birds don't hear the songs
of other bird species
different bandwidths
frequencies make one territory
into an overlapping many
sing right past each other
warbling their particular instinct
non-birds who listen hear
song from all territories at once
then a hawk glides to a tree
and they hide quietly

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When the city's rumble drowns them
songbirds tweak their songs

leave out the low sweet notes
edge the volume up to strident
streamline the melody
yet still can find a little love territory
a connection
as a less alluring mate

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At dusk a lightly trotting turkey
obviously can't fly
then gobbles on big reckless wings
up to a high branch
and sleeps lying down
if it falls
it better wak
before the ground arrives

Trespasses

How specific is forgiveness?
Forgiving your mother
magnanimously for all
she did or didn't do
doesn't teach about how
you focused the lens
taking it all in
on your slant
even that small
brought it about somehow
by what you were at the time
your peculiar magnetism of self.
It doesn't consider

whether by letting it happen
that way you hurt her back.
Even the smallest event some believe
are already written
the actors can't act differently
whatever they truly intend
making forgiveness a blessing
straight out of Oedipus' final escape.
So be specific in remembering
mutual trespassed, what it
would profit you to forgive.