

Pilgrims

I. *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*

Honorable dead Chinook, tye, King,
You heaved one hundred pounds up the Yukon
To deposit milt on her eggs drifting
In the silt of the graveled hollow you made
With your thinning head, your jaw hooked over
Itself, your throat closed so you would not stop
And return to the sea to eat. Your rich, red flesh
That leaped all falls kept you alive and now
Dissolves into the stream that feeds your young.

II. *Rangifer caribou*

The slipping tendons click over bones in your feet
When you move—a quarter ton. You belch a grunt
And the calves bawl, all along the line
That streams thousands a thousand miles
From this woodland bay north to the tundra,
Where lichens grow, and the sedges—
Except for the hundreds who starved or broke
Through the ice, the calf you left for the wolves,
And you, now in the cross hairs.

III. *Archilochus colubris*

Returning to nest, your body tilts until
Your blood-gem throat leads across the Gulf.
Your wings stroke down, then turn full over
To stroke up as strong—fifty per second.
Five hundred miles costs one tenth of you.
You feel magnetic current from the poles;
You sense the turning earth; your eye measures
The changing angle, sun against dark sea,
To guide you home.

EUGENE ENGLAND

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