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cicada heritage

Charles Rampp

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cicada heritage

tree limb ends are brown.
 (except poplars escaped.)
i had forgotten that
 from seventeen years past.
we were forest-camping,
 vacation time for six --
(tent fee we could afford)
 and the kids watched "bee-bees,"
wondering -- tried to count
 all but the bright crisp song.

this summer dead end-branches hanging down
bring quickly to remembrance old histories,
metallic fire-scorched, ahead of fact, sere,
anticipating nuclear spite-storm.

 i sought the little people -- friends,
 mentors from a kinder past,
 not believing they were gone.
 city trails are thin,
 hard to follow
 screened by smog,
 gnat-weak,
 cold.

yet i found some, carefully hidden now,
not in the thicket patches of scrapwoods
whose clearing-expenses builders had shunned --
 (though sometimes they slip out and
 round-dance there.)
but they hide here on the steep stream banks
which almost dry creeks have cut long ago,
before the springs that fed them were destroyed
and runoff waters diverted to drains.
(one close by here is still called 'herring run,'
although most days it would not float minnows)

so few are left, and they are hidden well,
quickly out of sight, bridge-glimpsed rarities
like our hopeful views of kids' heritage.
tree limb tips fall, but deep tap roots searching,
well supply the great stem (water as life)
in spite of metal eggs slit into bark
of our world's culture and the spying eyes,
doubtful -- mistrusting most of all, themselves,
cannot destroy trunk-stalwart root courage
and propaganda's chorus of death dies
for another cycle -- green leaves wither,
as quietly another ring is grown.

-- Charles Rampp