HIGHGATE ROAD

A. R. Ammons

A. R. Ammons' Copy

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I am grateful to the editors of the following periodicals where the listed poems first appeared:

The New York Times: *Shuffling, Recording, Lofty.*
The Ocean City Sentinel: *North Street, Reading.*
Choice: *Catch.*
the grapevine: *Speechlessness.*
The Nation: *Significances.*

These poems are dedicated to my son, John, with all my love.

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Shuffling

A centipede, the many legs,
will go straight away a way
and cut
back at an angle acute
to the course as if
to avert calamity
but then,
    suspecting
his move anticipated,
loop round completely,
reversing his way,
disheveling accidents and
probabilities into
cool shambles ahead.

Enterprise

A fish, fin
ichthy about the mouth, prim
or
dially
neat, translucent hinges
extending toothless
rims,
fans
his gills

For Louise and Tom Gossett

After a creek
drink
the goldfinch
lights in

the bank willow
which
drops the brook
a yellow leaf.

Significances

After brief heavy
rain at two o'clock,
he listened at
the wood's edge
and could tell by
the clusters and sheets of drops
that some drops, summarizing
the leaves they'd
fallen from,
were larger than
others or had
fallen farther,
and when the wind waved
wide like a conductor,
a rustle of events,
cool, keyless, spilled:
he listened,
his body sweetened level to
the variable nothingness.

Release

After a long
muggy
hanging
day
the raindrops
started so
sparse
the bumblebee flew
between
them home.

Modality

A grackle
flicks
down from
the cedar
onto
the shiny
alley
to see
if the
shower softened
the garbage
bags.

Meanings

1)
a grackle lands on a honeysucklebush
limb which sways too deep
(arching like a crossbow)
and sidling up
corrects the spill

2)
the hollyhock summer-weighty
leaned over nearly out
of its roots but leafless now
stands winter-stiff to the wind

3)
the pheasants leave tracks, an
abundance, in the snow:
icicles grow for the ground

Handle

Belief is okay
but can do
very little for
you unless you
would kill for
it in which
case it is
worth too much
to have or not
worth having.

Speechlessness

Coming to the windy
thicket I
said a brook
must be here and lay
down to listen
to the rustle but
fell asleep:
when I woke
the wind
was empty and
the brook had
turned into a poplar.

Gardening

I'd give bushels of blooms
to bank my hardy cover
into your cushion mums

Blue Skies

If I leaped
I would
plunge over the
pinetops into
the deepest sea

Recording

I remember when freezing
rain bent the yearling
pine over and stuck its
crown to ground ice:
but now it's spring
and the pine stands
up straight, frisky in
the breeze, except for
memory, a little lean.

Early Woods

I think
I have
a tick
on my
tock

Enough

I thought the
woods afire
or some
house behind the
trees
but it was
the wind
sprung loose
by a random
thunderstorm
smoking pollen fog
from the
evergreens

North Street

I tipped my head
to go under the
low boughs but

the sycamore mistook
my meaning and
bowed back.

Reading

It is nice
after dinner
to walk down to
the beach
and see
that the biggest
thing on earth
is
relatively calm.

One Thing and Another

It is one
thing
to know one
thing
and another
thing
to know another
thing.

Self

I wake up from
a nap
and sense a
well in myself:
I have
dropped into
the well:
the ripples
have just
vanished

For Doyle Fosso

I walked at night and
became alarmed
at the high lights and amplitude
but passed a brook
the sound of whose
breaking water
took my whole attention.

Generation Gap

limber body
stiff dick

stiff body
limber dick

Natives

Logos is an engine
myth fuels,
civilzation
a pattern,
scale-like crust
on a hill
but the hill's swell
derives from
gravity's
deep fluids
centering elsewhere
otherwise

Catch

Near dusk: approaching
my house, I see
over the roof

the quartermoon
and, aiming, walk it
down my chimney flue.

Lofty

No use to make any more
angels for the air,
the medium and residence of such:
gas is no state
to differentiate:
come down here to
bird and weed, stump
and addled fear and swirl up
unity's angelic spire,
rot lit in rising fire.

Famine

Starving is so funny:
the cow, can
you imagine, the last shuck

gone, moos lean: the
mule shrinks up and
walks small:

isn't that funny: the
chickens are slices
of feathers on

razor sandwiches: can
you imagine: children's
hands become

knucklebone games:
the wind shakes
humping to harvest.

Imaginary Number

The difference between
me &

nothing is
zero.

Fortitude

We should think
we can get
by with a
setback or two:

the lawn makes
a life of
starting over and
swirly bugs

in dusk air,
prey, get where
they're going
changing course.

Ghosts

When first snow
hits
the woods-edge
bushes, it's as

if the leaves,
recently lent
the ground, were
returning from

the sky to
catch
the branches and
hold on again.

Soaker

You can appreciate
this kind of rain,
thunderless,
small-gauged
after a dry spell,
the wind quiet,
multitudes of leaves
as if yelling
the smallest thanks.

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