Field: A Hymn For Eye & Ear
by Richard Hague

1

Goldenrod that ticks
in patches, dried,
or swamped in drizzly spring—
come up again
inside this churning month
and turn the sun on
down here at our height:
living is a matter of good light.

2

Green moss heals the stone,
delivered, like old glass,
to scratch and crack.
It makes a green man
of a standing trunk,
crawls across a gully
on an inch-thick locust pole,
invades the old well,
a richer kind of water.

3

Snail shells listen
to the field, ground
colored ears. They hear
the fox bark from
the fallen trees, the pond carp
splashing in the middle of the night
when water rises toward the moon
but stalls in overhanging bones
of sumac, hickory, oak,
to drape its knots and strands there
like a firm thin flesh whose pulse is nightwind,
landslides, storm—
all noises that
the snail shells hear
as if from endless distance
sound in circles then
sing inward, inward,
in those brittle ears.
And what is blood?
That same stream in big trees.
That green skim of the insect
smashed on stone.
That standing water in which
straw infuses spinners, tumblers,
gliders with clear feet.
That blue speck in the jelly
of spring ponds.
That heat which blossoms
into talons of the hawk
or white bill of the great ghost
bird of night.
That drumming in the drowner’s ears.
That rip-current in the landlocked field
which sets a body flatly rafting
through the troughed and crested earth
toward the many shores of stone.

So fox-claw, bird track,
turned stone drying in the sun,
so the smashed grass where the deer lay,
bone-splint in the creek sand,
fish eye blue as birds’ eggs,
fungi like the pale tongues of the trees,
puffballs smoking after shrew’s leap
toward the beetle,
so rye grass steering wind
along its thousand courses,
toad carcass leathering in dry-rot stump,
broken ribs askew,
thumbnail skulls like tarnished spoons,
blue flies glinting in the folds of cow-chips,
pigweed with its thick leaves in the log-shade,
blacksnakes heating on flat stones,
whirligigs amuck in inch-deep ditches,
mud wasps lazing at the edges—

so all are of the helter-skeltering
to haunt or speed or stall or bury
spilling from the center of all things,
all the music of our seeing
gone to fire and blood and eyesight
in this upland day’s
vast beginning light.