

E.A. CARPENTIER

HAWK SHADOW

(after "Hurt Hawks" by Robinson Jeffers)

The hunters have killed a hawk.
It moved. They shot.
One said he thought it was a deer.
In a fir.

They are drunk. The sweetness of fermentation wafts from them
where they wave their arms
in unsure celebration.

The smell of them smears a curdled layer
over the burnt incense of balsam,
drying needles on an old wind.

For a brief moment you, too, long for a gun
but your body is smarter,
holds your breath, keeps your muscles
taut as piano wire.

Ahead of you a man says:
You're not supposed to kill these.
We'll keep it in the freezer, feed it to the dogs.

You do not move or blink (you've forgotten your orange vest)
until you hear their crashing fade, a withdrawing wave.

In their absence, there is absence,
a small void in the fabric of place;
the trees do not sway, the wind
retreats, the night hesitates to rise.

On the earth, a spattering of feathers.