

Charles Goodrich

Dragonflies

At first they seem paramilitary,
rattling above the lakeshore reeds,
conning the shore for anything edible—
the kind of carnivorous machine

a soldier might be reincarnated as
if he got chewed up by shrapnel
and died submerged in the roar of a helicopter.

But the longer I drift
in this borrowed boat
at the shallow margins of a mountain lake,
the more inquisitive they become, landing on the oar
beside my grub-white fingers,
sniffing my intentions,
studying me
with their finely-tooled eyes.

Now one clatters up
and circles my head
as if testing my compass,
and now it hovers in the air
before my third eye—a hypnotist
willing me to open my soul...

I don't.
It's almost dusk. My friends
have kindled a fire back at camp. I ply the oars.
But the dragonflies
are mating now, clacking their wings,
and crashing together like

crazy little gods,
like furious amnesty,

like a man and a woman,
young, scared,
screwing themselves up to strange heights, loving
and hurting each other
one last night
before he gets shipped off to the war.



Charles Goodrich

Report from Behind

At the age of thirty, I vowed to cultivate
patience.

At forty
I decided I wanted nothing more
than time.

So I took my time, and now
I'm fifty, and I've fallen
far behind—
no job, no cell phone, no implants,
not a single tattoo.

I don't know the names
of the latest pop stars or even the current
Pope. When it comes to trivia games
I'm a total loss. I couldn't tell you
who won the World Series
or the war in Iraq.

I'm just a straggler,
an aimless pilgrim, a student
of the weeds beside the road...

Hey, look here,
it must have rained last night. The bloom is back
on the cheeks of things. The thistles
are almost ready to pop.

I don't suppose I will ever catch up.