

Poet's Walk

*Ayr Mount—Hillsborough,
North Carolina*

I decide to stop at “Rapids Rest”
half way around the looping trail.

“Rapids,” I suspect as
I spy them, might be
some poet's sense of hyperbole
to describe this modest quickening
of the Eno river's pace as she stumbles
over a rocky outcrop then
settles back into her meander.

The butterfly which landed behind
my shoulder in the parking lot
(a little fritillary I believe, though
I have not been able to get a proper
look) is with me still. Now, however,
it has migrated to where, if I turn
my head all the way right, I might
just barely see one wing waving. Why,
I wonder, does it linger there upon
my back? And for how much longer?

Soon eyes are glued to a black-bodied
centipede with yellow markings
along its sides crawling out
from beneath the scrubby
undergrowth sprouting between me
and the river. It finds itself
on bare-packed earth in front
of the bench where I am sitting,
decides on a quick U-turn. Riding
waves of yellow legs the beast retreats
to the greenery in a search for that
which black-bodied centipedes
with yellow markings
along their sides crave
on a warm August morning.

I arise to continue my search for that
which a poet with a butterfly hitch-
hiking on his back craves on a warm

August morning, find, after a time,
that my companion hangs on even as I
begin to crunch across the parking lot
again—though now, in order to see
I must twist, spy its reflection
in my car window.

I hesitate for a moment.
But know that I will crush it if I return
to the drivers' seat while we are
still attached. And so
I brush ever so gently
with my map of Poet's Walk.

The insect seems as reluctant
to part company as I, circles
several times and almost lands
on me once more before flying off.

“Rapids,” I conclude as
I remember the moment, must be
some poet's sense of hyperbole
to describe the modest quickening
of the Eno river's pace as she stumbles
over that rocky outcrop.

The rest, however,
strikes me as true enough.

Steve Bloom
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