

Green Thought in Green Shade

annihilating all that's made
Andrew Marvell, "The Garden"

We have lost their laughing color in the sky,
the only tropical bird this far north,
lost because honeybees filled their nests,
because we chopped down cypress swamps.

I count seven askew in Audubon's print above my bed:
life size, a foot long, leaf-green tail and wings,
yellow neck and scarlet cheeks, big black eyes
and curved beaks biting cockleburrs.

When one bright parrot was shot:
the loud emerald flock would sink
and surround her, bewildered.
We humans rarely see such devotion.

Was it love? fearlessness or folly, for a hunter
could shoot a hundred more on the ground
and fill a burlap sack for the milliner
to adorn preening ladies' bonnets.

One gunman said, "Several shots fill a basket."
After shooting these seven to paint, Audubon
wrote: "The flesh is tolerable food. But,
kept as pets, they never learn to talk."

Shot for green fashion-feathers.
Shot because hundreds picked an orchard clean,
in fact bit to the core for the seeds
and spit out whole the white apple fruit.

The last died in the wild a hundred years ago.
The last one in a zoo soon after. What fun
would one have alone who
frolicked with raucous company?

Women no longer wear hats but
Carolina Parakeets are long gone
like the Ivory-Bill despite uncertain
flashes of vivid green through the trees

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