

Timothy Murphy

from “Another Flood of Memories”

for Eldridge Hardie

The Legacy

I come to sing my praise of Super Chief,
sire to the greatest lines of hunting Labs.
Through long research I’ve come to this belief,
studying pedigrees and keeping tabs.

My five dogs, all have borne his mighty seed
and his famed father’s named for the Black Hills,
Paha Sapa. They are the Dakotas’ breed.
When mallard drakes are flashing orange bills,

when pheasant cocks wake before dawn to crow,
when geese abandon gravel river banks,
when Labradors precede us through the snow,
I praise the Holy Ghost and offer thanks

for two dogs whelped when I was a young child
first following my father in the wild.

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Lone Scotch Quartet

Heavy to carry from a gravel road,
his magnum twelve too much gun for his age,
too much kick from a 3.5 inch load,
my father ridiculed my twenty gauge

before his final hunt when he recanted.
Decoys arrayed in darkness, first dim light,
Maud and I breathless as four mallards slanted,
wings tip to tip, greenheads aligned just right,

one shell, three dead, the distant one a swimmer
Maud splashed to snatch out of the six inch water,
then fetch three in the crepuscule, its glimmer,
proving she was Diktyinna's worthy daughter.

My little gun, Father no longer scorned
three weeks before the Murphy family mourned.

Apologia pro sua aetate

Chucky, will we be skunked or *Really Skunked*
like Maggie in that pile of blown-down trees
so many years ago? My head is thunked
by a low limb that fells me to my knees.

I think there's not a cock in Ransom County;
whatever, glorious November weather
whether or not we harvest any bounty
or find more than a fallen pheasant feather.

You are so young, and I am grown so old,
I feel sorry I can no longer hunt
as with your famous predecessor, Bold
Fenian, like you a muscled runt

from Lone Willow Kennel, which whelped two males
to lead me where the flushing rooster sails.

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La meilleure saison pour sa foi

What is it that an old hunter believes?
When all the corn is combined on our hills
and startled puppies make their first retrieves,
the first frost forms on country window sills.

The tired beaver sleeps in his well-built house,
the widow piles the blankets that she weaves,
and gun shy grow the wary sharp-tail grouse
while Protestants sing “Bringing in the Sheaves.”

When fall plumage puts on its bravest show,
red and green heads, the geese in V-shaped ranks
flee the Dakotas in November snow.
He bows before his Maker to give thanks

for the grave grandeur of the prairie’s girth,
a seventh decade to patrol the earth.

—Deer Opener, 2016