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## Netting Bats Near Orizaba

Walter McDonald

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NETTING BATS NEAR ORIZABA

—to Dilford

The mammalogist showed us  
where to stretch the net so the bats  
which swoop down from caves  
through this forest path to the river  
would impale themselves gill-like,  
their radar warning them  
even of such thin filaments,

but generations-sure of this corridor  
spilling out into millions of mosquitoes  
hovering over the river like bait,  
they would not believe.

Later, pans scrubbed and dried,  
pipes smoked and cleaned and cold,  
we lounged in canvas chairs, zipped up our coats,  
and watched the stars. The frogs, the frogs,  
all down the river brecketing began,  
flooding the night with frogs.

Unable to hear wings fluttering,  
we felt the wind shift,  
thousands of bats beating toward us,  
the camp dogs whining, yearning to howl.

The neg sagged with hundreds of bats  
writhing like larvae in honeycombs,  
obsidian eyes glinting at our lanterns,  
their hog snouts pink,  
wrinkling for breath,  
baring their needle tusks.  
Counting, we banded each left leg  
and let them go.

Next night, only a dozen collided,  
were banded and released.  
For two nights more, the net was clean.  
And then we dropped the net,  
set up the cameras and red lights.  
Blindly believing their new map  
the bats bunched high  
along the corridor of trees,  
ignoring the absence of echoes.

Next season we went back, reset the cameras.  
An hour after dusk the sniffing dogs  
stood up, began to moan,  
the air thrumming with bat wings  
still flying the highest formation  
under an umbrella of branches,  
safe from the net in their minds.