

Shiloh

I could not have known that Whip-Poor-Will and Chuck-Will's-Widow
Yankee and Rebel relatives among nightjars would be together
at Shiloh, calling in furious antiphony past midnight when I
stopped to listen and think among the shadows of great oaks

bathed in summer moonlight, and to read and remember
from inscribed plaques on pedestals. On the knoll before me
the 107th Illinois Infantry, on April 7, 1862,
faced the Confederate Cavalry and . . . BALLLOOOM!

Across the woodland to my right a great clap and rumbling roll that
left hair on the nape of my terrified neck erect for moments
until I heard the jet's departing whine.

But nightjars, thought I, climbing back into the Chevrolet,
so easy to imitate. How many innocent feathered tops-of-posts
were blasted into eternity across those few fateful days?