



(Image: Joe Prekop)

Dawn to Dusk: Leaps of Faith

*We can't right all wrongs, but we can maintain a
hopeful confidence that God bats last.*

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Materials developed by Kim Langley, M.Ed. for WordSPA ministry

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(Image: Northern Prairie Wildlife
Research Center)



Aimless Love

This morning as I walked along the lakeshore,
I fell in love with a wren
and later in the day with a mouse
the cat had dropped under the dining room table.

In the shadows of an autumn evening,
I fell for a seamstress
still at her machine in the tailor's window,
and later for a bowl of broth,
steam rising like smoke from a naval battle.

This is the best kind of love, I thought,
without recompense, without gifts,
or unkind words, without suspicion,
or silence on the telephone.

The love of the chestnut,
the jazz cap and one hand on the wheel.

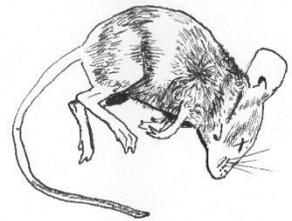
No lust, no slam of the door—
the love of the miniature orange tree,
the clean white shirt, the hot evening shower,
the highway that cuts across Florida.

No waiting, no huffiness, or rancor—
just a twinge every now and then

for the wren who had built her nest
on a low branch overhanging the water
and for the dead mouse,
still dressed in its light brown suit.

But my heart is always propped up
in a field on its tripod,
ready for the next arrow.

After I carried the mouse by the tail
to a pile of leaves in the woods,
I found myself standing at the bathroom sink
gazing down affectionately at the soap,



(Image: Hilary Schenker)

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so patient and soluble,
so at home in its pale green soap dish.
I could feel myself falling again
as I felt its turning in my wet hands
and caught the scent of lavender and stone.

By Billy Collins, from *Aimless Love*. © Random House, 2013.

All That Is Glorious Around Us (title of an exhibit on *The Hudson River School*)

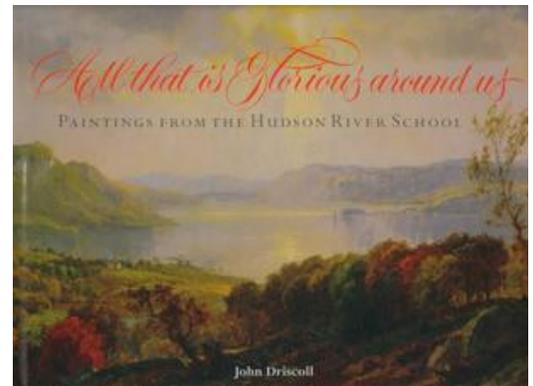
is not, for me, these grand vistas, sublime peaks, mist-filled overlooks, towering clouds, but doing errands on a day of driving rain, staying dry inside the silver skin of the car, 160,000 miles, still running just fine. Or later, sitting in a café warmed by the steam from white chicken chili, two cups of dark coffee, watching the red and gold leaves race down the street, confetti from autumn's bright parade. And I think of how my mother struggles to breathe, how few good days she has now, how we never think about the glories of breath, oxygen cascading down our throats to the lungs, simple as the journey of water over a rock. It is the nature of stone / to be satisfied / writes Mary Oliver, It is the nature of water / to want to be somewhere else, rushing down a rocky tor or high escarpment, the panoramic landscape boundless behind it. But everything glorious is around us already: black and blue graffiti shining in the rain's bright glaze, the small rainbows of oil on the pavement, where the last car to park has left its mark on the glistening street, this radiant world.

By Barbara Crooker from *Radiance*. © Word Press, 2005.

Morning Person

God, best at making in the morning, tossed
stars and planets, singing and dancing, rolled
Saturn's rings spinning and humming, twirled the earth
so hard it coughed and spat the moon up, brilliant
bubble floating around it for good, stretched holy

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(Image: Cornell University Press)

hands till birds in nervous sparks flew forth from
them and beasts—lizards, big and little, apes,
lions, elephants, dogs and cats cavorting,
tumbling over themselves, dizzy with joy when
God made us in the morning too, both man
and woman, leaving Adam no time for
sleep so nimbly was Eve bouncing out of
his side till as night came everything and
everybody, growing tired, declined, sat
down in one soft descended Hallelujah.

By Vassar Miller, from *Struggling to Swim on Concrete*. © New Orleans Poetry Journal, 1984.

In the Produce Aisle

In the vivid red
of the fresh berries,
in the pebbled skin
of an emerald lime,
in the bright colors
of things made
to be transitory,

you see the same
loveliness
you find in your own
delicate flesh,
the lines fanned
around your eyes
charming like
the burnish
of plums,

your life like
all the other
fragile organics,
your soft hand
hovering over
the succulent apple,
you reach for it,
already transforming.



(Image: Diva Kreszi)

By Kirsten Dierking, from *Northern Oracle*. © Spout Press, 2007.

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Arbor

As a child she planted
these roses, these vines
heavy with trumpets and honey.

Now at the end of her life
she asks for an arbor. At night
she sees roses rooted in heaven,

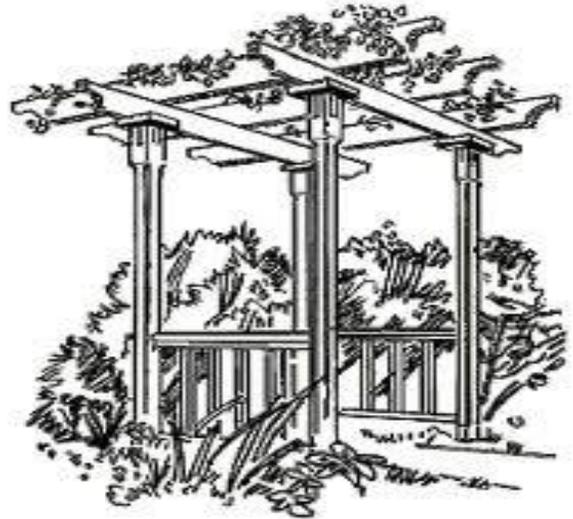
wisteria hanging its vineyards
over her head, all green things
climbing, climbing.

She wants to walk through this door,
not as she walks to the next
room but to another place

altogether. She will leave her cane
at the door but the door is
necessary. She knows how the raw
space in a wall nearly burned or
newly born makes children pause
or step in. It leads somewhere.

They look out on another country.

By Nancy Willard, from *Swimming Lessons*. © Brighton, 2001.



(Image: www.realcedar.com)

Gray's First Sober Year

This new life is better
than a dozen beer-joint romances
or a hundred drunks at fishing camp.
My habit now is not drinking,
and waking up where I belong.
I can see colors again,
and I don't feel like a turd in the punchbowl
whenever I go around people.

I'll mow the weeds for Sharon
and almost enjoy it. She's even given up
checking my breath whenever I come home.

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I went shopping for our anniversary
and wound up crying in the store,
but not the kind of tears you cry
when your wife catches you lying in the shed
with your pistol jabbed up in your mouth
and vodka running out your nose.

The only thing she could think to do
was check me into another detox,
and this time it finally took.
This year has made me different—
vodka could never do that for long.
Some days when I wake up early
and listen to Sharon lying there breathing,
it feels like somebody snuck in while we slept
and changed our sheets.

By William Notter, from *More Space Than Anyone Can Stand*. © Texas Review Press, 2002.

Up-Hill

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow, dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you waiting at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.

By Christina Rossetti, from *Poems*.
© Everyman's Library, 1993.



(Image: Source unavailable)

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The Trees

The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too,
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

By Phillip Larkin, from *The Collected Poems*. © Faber, 1993.

Oceans

I have a feeling that my boat
has struck, down there in the depths,
against a great thing.
And nothing
happens! Nothing...Silence...Waves...

- Nothing happens? Or has everything happened,
And are we standing now, quietly, in the new life?

By Juan Ramón Jiménez, translated by Robert Bly, from *News of the Universe*.
© Random House, 1982.

blessing the boats

may the tide
that is entering even now
the lip of our understanding
carry you out
beyond the face of fear
may you kiss
the wind then turn from it

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certain that it will
love your back may you
open your eyes to water
water waving forever
and may you in your innocence
sail through this to that

By Lucille Clifton, from *Blessing the Boats*. © BOA Editions, 2000.

A Church in Italy

Last summer, in church in Italy,
I prayed for all of you, asked not for forgiveness
And strength, but that all the sadness of our days,

All the grief of our lives,
All the loneliness given us be taken,
Without judgment — asked for life and light.

That was the first time in twenty-three years something
Like that happened to me. Not knowing the modern prayers,
I fell back on the old way of ending prayer, recited:

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning,
Is now, and ever shall be, world without end

Then dropped some lire coins in the metal offering box,
Walked through the heavily curtained doorway into the
Mediterranean heat, into the hard traffic of the village,
Into the harsh light of the afternoon
Into this world without end.

By Thom Tammaro, from *When the Italians Came to My Home Town*.
© Spoon River Poetry Press, 1995.



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