

IN MY UNKNOWING

Oh taste and see.

—Psalm 34:8

I was driving through the fields of Heaven when I realized I was still on Earth, because Earth was all I had ever known of Heaven and no other place would do for living forever. I had grown beyond belief from seeing that everything I felt had sprung from lives I'd already lived, so that I could feel the way I did, which was so much I had no idea where to begin. The crawling? The slithering? The leaping? The flying? The dying? If you had been there with me in the passenger seat and asked me about the newt or flea or pachyderm, I would have told you everything I knew, which was a frightening amount, and not only that, but just how much I loved them all—those Heavenly beings: the serpent, the lion, the mosquito, the hawk, the antelope, the worm; and not only beings, but stones as well. Each particular thing so mysterious in my unknowing, I knew I was living forever. I knew the fields through which I was driving were the fields of Heaven in which I was tasting and seeing, seeing and tasting.

WEATHERMAN

A cloud spelled out a rune I couldn't read
fast enough before it morphed into
another form that changed again, so I
recited something true enough from an ancient
book: "The wind blows to the south and turns
to the north; round and round it goes." The screen
went blank and then *the slip*. No matter, I thought,
I'll drive a truck. "The clouds are codes for reading
the blues," I said beneath my breath as I
walked out into the rain with my umbrella
and attitude that kept me lean if un-
employed. A hermit thrush reported the dusk
somewhere in the woods on my way home and I
called back like a human bird who'd lost his wings:
"Light's such a fickle thing but I sing for it."

NIGHT WALK

I prayed for luck with so little on the animals thought
I was one of them and talked to me in their fricative tongues.
What could I say when I didn't believe but wanted to use
those words I used to use like "begotten not made"
because I loved the sound of them so much
I wished they killed like they used to kill when music
played in the hills on silent strings and reeds.
I put down my gun and gazed at the sky where the clouds
spelled out the truth in vapors I couldn't hope
to read, so I plagiarized with a stick in the dirt:
"Wisdom is folly and eternity moot
inside my heart." A hermit thrush yodeled
in the lingo of dusk: "Light's in love with darkness,
so lie down with it and dream." What greater thing
could I become, I thought, than a translator
of a song that has no words but only sounds
that say, "This beauty lives inside the woods
as consolation for everything that can't be said."
I watched the sky turn black and then the stars
come out like animal eyes so close and far apart.

I WEPT WITH JOY ABOVE THE RIVER

I wept with joy above the river.
I wept with sorrow above the river.
My tears were clear, both sweet and bitter.
One leaf cried out to another,
“Empty me today of all my color.
Fill me tomorrow with a shot of sugar.”
This was the still ritual for my feet:
To stand on the earth that took
of *earth earth with ill* and sing.

POET

She's the host of her own show, singing
to the world in her makeshift studio:
"My music fades in the light like the moon
for failing to say what it means in the dark."
She leans into the microphone with all
the cool of a shade from the underworld.
She sings in memory of the one she grieves
with a smile that fools her fans—a tune
she says she learned from the sparrow's song,
but also the clouds and trees and grass—
each stunning thing with its guitar
that takes both silence and loss to hear.

DISPATCH FROM PUTNEY

All morning the air whispered things I might forget
as I sat listening to the silence
beyond the drone of the apple sprayer—a voice
for hearing myself as someone else:
Put down your pen and pick up a stick.
See how clearly it writes in the dirt.
What did you think?
That you weren't the farthest point from yourself?
That silence runs out of ink?