

The Fountain

Don't say, don't say there is no water
to solace the dryness at our hearts. I have seen

the fountain springing out of the rock wall and you drinking there. And I too
before your eyes

found footholds and climbed
to drink the cool water.

The woman of that place, shading her eyes,
frowned as she watched—but not because
she grudged the water,

only because she was waiting
to see we drank our fill and were
refreshed.

Don't say, don't say there is no water.
That fountain is there among its scalloped
green and gray stones,

it is still there and always there
with its quiet song and strange power
to spring in us,
up and out through the rock.

by Denise Levertov, from *The Collected Poems fo Denise Levertov*

Prospective Immigrants Please Note

Either you will
go through this door
or you will not go through.

If you go through
there is always the risk
of remembering your name.

Things look at you doubly
and you must look back
and let them happen.

If you do not go through
it is possible
to live worthily

to maintain your attitudes
to hold your position
to die bravely

but much will blind you,
much will evade you,
at what cost who knows?

The door itself
makes no promises.
It is only a door.

Adrienne Rich

SWEET DARKNESS

David Whyte

When your eyes are tired
the world is tired also.

When your vision has gone
no part of the world can find you.

Time to go into the dark
where the night has eyes
to recognize its own.

There you can be sure
you are not beyond love.

The dark will be your womb
tonight.

The night will give you a horizon
further than you can see.

You must learn one thing.
The world was made to be free in.

Give up all the other worlds
except the one to which you belong.

Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet
confinement of your aloneness
to learn

anything or anyone
that does not bring you alive

is too small for you.

You walking, your footprints are
the road, and nothing else;
there is no road, walker,
you make the road by walking.
By walking you make the road,
And when you look backward,
You see the path you
Never will step on again.
Walker, there is no road,
Only wind trails in the sea.

-- Antonio Machado

In the very earliest time
When both people and animals lived on earth
A person could become an animal if he wanted to
and an animal could become a human being.
Sometimes they were people
and sometimes animals
and there was no difference.
All spoke the same language
That was the time when words were like magic.
The human mind had mysterious powers.
A word spoken by chance might have strange consequences.
It would suddenly come alive
and what people wanted to happen could happen--
all you had to do was say it.
Nobody could explain this:
That's the way it was.

Nalungiaq, Inuit woman interviewed by ethnologist Knud Rasmussen in the early twentieth century.

<http://www.globalonenessproject.org/library/articles/lessons-old-language>

SOMETIMES

Sometimes, when a bird cries out,
Or the wind sweeps through a tree,
Or a dog howls in a far off farm,
I hold still and listen a long time.

My soul turns and goes back to the place
Where, a thousand forgotten years ago,
The bird and the blowing wind
Were like me, and were my brothers.

My soul turns into a tree,
And an animal, and a cloud bank.
Then changed and odd it comes home
And asks me questions. What should I reply?

Herman Hesse (Rbt Bly)

Don't Go back to sleep...Rumi

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.

People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.

The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

All the True Vows

David Whyte

All the true vows
are secret vows
the ones we speak out loud
are the ones we break.

There is only one life
you can call your own
and a thousand others
you can call by any name you want.

Hold to the truth you make
every day with your own body,
don't turn your face away.

Hold to your own truth
at the center of the image
you were born with.

Those who do not understand
their destiny will never understand
the friends they have made
nor the work they have chosen

nor the one life that waits
beyond all the others.

By the lake in the wood
in the shadows
you can
whisper that truth
to the quiet reflection
you see in the water.

Whatever you hear from
the water, remember,

it wants you to carry
the sound of its truth on your lips.

Remember,
in this place
no one can hear you

and out of the silence
you can make a promise
it will kill you to break,

that way you'll find
what is real and what is not.

I know what I am saying.
Time almost forsook me
and I looked again.

Seeing my reflection
I broke a promise
and spoke
for the first time
after all these years

in my own voice,

before it was too late
to turn my face again.

"Widening Circles"

by Rainer Maria Rilke; translation by Joanna Macy and Anita Barrows

I live my life in widening circles
that reach out across the world.
I may not complete this last one
but I give myself to it.

I circle around God, around the primordial tower.
I've been circling for thousands of years
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,
a storm, or a great song?

Book of Hours, I 2

Primary Wonder

Days pass when I forget the mystery.

Problems insoluble and problems offering

their own ignored solutions

jostle for my attention, they crowd its antechamber

along with a host of diversions, my courtiers, wearing

their colored clothes; caps and bells.

And then

once more the quiet mystery

is present to me, the throng's clamor

recedes: the mystery

that there is anything, anything at all,

let alone cosmos, joy, memory, everything,

rather than void: and that, O Lord,

Creator, Hallowed one, You still,

hour by hour sustain it.

-- *Denise Levertov*

Lost

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,
I have made this place around you,
If you leave it you may come back again, saying Here.
No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows
Where you are. You must let it find you.

David Wagoner

(as heard on "Poetry and the Imagination," David Whyte, side A)

<http://www.breakoutofthebox.com/table6.htm> -- listing of many other poems