

LIGHT
AT
THE
TORN
HORIZON

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PAUL MURRAY, OP



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To Denis O'Brien
and
In memory of Dennis O'Driscoll

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A Reading

It opens like a river
in full spate, or like a window
with a gust of wind.
And it's as if an archangel
had entered the room. And everybody
has to stop what they're doing.
And the air is a river of words.
And all of a sudden you see
– and with a start –
that an archangel *has* entered,
and your heart is in your mouth.
And you feel you are drowning
in a river of divine words, and hear
yourself saying, over and over,
'How can this be?'

I.
The Shaken Branches

Weather

I know there will be other
days like this, other dawns
as bleak, other sudden
storms over the sea, other
driving winds as crazed
and untamed, pelting us
with their chill black rain.

But, most days,
there are moments also
of bold surprise in the
weather, when, if you wait,
as now, a gleam
strengthens at the torn
horizon, and light
– unimaginable light –
pours across the open
fields, brightening
the air above the distant
forest and the nearest
trees, shining clear
through the low, trembling
branches
dripping with rain.

Source

This is what my soul craves:
beauty of a kind that draws me
down to the root of my desire.
And you, Source of beauty,
responding to my need, have
planted signs for me to follow,
traces for me to track, a tide
of marvels at almost every step.
Yet even now distractions
hold me fast. I cannot reach
the depth to which I'm called.

O come, Spirit of God,
come to my aid, and breathe
upon my being with fresh
breath. Come, quicken
to new life the ancient sloth
of sense and spirit. Come
out of the glad music of a
mountain stream, or out
of a sudden storm, or a spring
breeze thick with orange and
apple blossom. O so inflame
these traces with your mark

it almost seems that, when
on slope and hill the wind shakes
out the scent of gorse, I can
breathe in your breath.

O beauty's
hidden Source, take pity on
my blind dust, on my shadowed
heart's dumb ache.

Perspective

One day it's enough,
you feel, to view the world
through the common lens
of history, content
with no vision wider
than that of the obvious.

Next day, caught by
a tumult of longing, you search
among the straw and
chaff of things for the golden
corn of meaning.

Questions

1.

What improbable discord
of space and time
causes accident to dance,
the viruses
to blossom in the lungs,
the cruel slidings and collidings
of circumstance?

2.

Anyone who has looked,
really looked,
into the eyes of the innocent who suffer
will detect two things
being spoken.

First, with sadness:

*There is no point
in seeking words
to match the measure of my pain
or anybody else's –
words are impossible.*

But then, in striking contrast,
this question:

*Can there not be found
on earth
words, human words,
to describe
what I am going through?*