

After the Fall

Then it was as it is now—
the sun slipping over the earth's equator,
large animals wanting to sleep.

Looking back, Eve must have seen
flowers fanning like Oriental ladies,
honeycombs, frothy water running over rocks,
fish in their bright lures.

They bickered on the way out.
God said nothing. Not then.
He stood in the cast shadow of twin cherubim.

This afternoon the sun was impossibly bright.
Are we no better, I thought,
each of us blaming the other,
as though we had never heard the story?

I saw around me fruited trees,
the rust hips of blighted roses,
grasses going to seed, and weeds everywhere
whitening like ash,

a landscape not so terrible.
God would have said then
that to learn your face
is to earn innocence again,

and Eve, walking west, would have passed
a patch of flooded crabgrass,
ecstatic birds glimpsing themselves
in the dark water.

—Gina Clark

This poem won third place in the BYU Studies 1998 Poetry Contest.