

Not Ordinary Church

Oratorio

Allyson Sawtell, 4/20

Coyote-song thrills back and forth across the road on cloudless summer dusk.
Broadly-banded layers of rose and orange, indifferent to our awe,
fade over the mountains across the valley.

And we remember another summer dusk, another song:
Deceptive warmth on our shoulders, we hike the rock-steep path to the top.
Pilgrims to the shrine.
Darkness falls, soft around the edges.
Then hundreds of thousands of bats pour out of the cave, their wing-song filling the entire
sky.
Voiceless, we shiver and witness.
And in the dark, we make our way back down, songs ringing in our ears.

River-song curves the bottom of the canyon.
Tear swept vision of depth and beauty.
Indifferent to our awe, it blesses with rushing music.
In the shallows I fill my hat, anointing my head
Breathing again.

Drum-song in the adobe church Christmas Eve midnight.
Unseen, it echoes off the walls.
As shivering witness, outsider and colonizer, I stand immobilized.
Heartbeat to heartbeat touches holiness and confession.

Song of sheer physicality, freedom, strength, and power,
the humpback breaches, leaps from the chill Alaska waters.
Eight times for the sheer joy of the dance.
Miracle parting of the waters in leaps and turns, she graces us with her presence,
and then is gone, back to her calf,
to sing.



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