

# Elusive Beauty

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*If your everyday life seems poor, don't blame it; blame yourself; admit to yourself you are not enough of a poet to call forth its riches; because for the creator there is no poverty and no poor indifferent place.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

**W**hether in Deuteronomy, when Moses rebuked the rebellious Israelites, or multiple times throughout the Gospels, “ears to hear” refers to the capability to respond in one’s heart to the words of the Lord, or, more precisely, to be spiritually awake. What does this have to do with beauty? Everything.

In my article “The Alchemy of Adaptation,” published in the spring 2018 issue of *Quest*, I wrote: “Many artists speak of allowing ‘the brush to paint,’ ‘the fingers to play the notes,’ or ‘the words to arrive.’ Is this magic? I believe so. What they are really referring to is a skill they have developed, through conscious receptivity, to become clear vehicles for Universal Will. Over time, maybe countless lives, we can gradually learn to let the ‘little me’ step out of the way ‘for the performance of the miracles of the One Thing, as the Hermetic text the Emerald Tablet of Hermes puts it.”

Painters, musicians, authors, and poets who learn to open their senses and hearts can channel beauty directly from the Source that created them and all existence. It raises their work to a higher plane, above the prerequisites of skill and craft. As each of us is a hub of expression for the Source, this potential lies latent in everyone.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, an English poet and Jesuit priest in the Victorian era, wrote, “I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it.” Somehow, while observing these tiny flowers, he was able to transcend the simple vision of a small part of nature and see the magnificence of the creator abiding there.

Do you think Hopkins could have possessed this vision if he was seeing through the eyes of his everyday self, the one who worries, frets, and out of fear lives in either the

past or the future? What is required is to be totally present in the moment, allowing the veil of all that is unreal to drop from our thoughts. It is like the state one endeavors to reach in meditation. The subtle difference here is permitting ourselves to flow utterly into unison with, and be fully accessible to, a deeper knowing for the purpose of cocreating.

Have you ever been entranced by the ever-changing kaleidoscope of the natural world, slipped into the notes of a sonata, become the intricate twists and turns of a tango, channeled a Petrarchan sonnet? Any of these moments, and innumerable others, offer the opportunity to be possessed by love.

There is almost a quality of total self-effacement, not in a negative sense, but as a means to humility. In so doing, the individual becomes an empty vessel filled by a Mind which is capable of guiding you beyond what is possible on your own. Unwillingness to be in tune and instructed in this manner prevents us from conveying true beauty. So if, for example, you are writing and catch yourself thinking about what to write next, put down your pen! Breathe, let go, and simply listen.

For me, the natural world was the first ingress to finding the beauty of which I speak. A sigh of wind through trees, the chanting of the birds, a chorus of crickets, the soft caress of a light rain on my skin, the aroma of a rose—rapt attention to all these sensations and more was my magic carpet to arrive at the door of the Divine.

One day, by chance, I happened to spy two sparrow hawks circling so high it hurt to look. In my lap was a poetry book, where words struggled to be what I’d just seen: the cobalt sky a canvas for flight, the hawks inscribing eternity upon the vanishing October light.

A pungent Indian summer breeze prompted whispers from remaining leaves. I eavesdropped, blinked my eyes; only one bird remained. That feathered missile launched into air so rare, I could no longer see him there, but wished I could go too.

The weight of book, paper, and pen drew me back to earth again, but to this day, part of me ascends. ■



## Star Trails\*

Some grip their lanterns through  
a great darkness, hearts so tightly  
woven in the ways of this world,  
mere shadows of who they might be

while others, often ignored or even  
deemed mad, channel true power,  
minds illuminated by all that is holy  
despite the heaviness hunkering  
down around us . . .

Picture Vincent viewing  
the countryside of St. Rémy  
from an open window before  
dawn at St. Paul asylum

Imagine the genius of his sight  
akin to the light from a camera  
not yet invented for another  
century or so, capturing

with transcendent vision  
star trails scoring  
the night

sky



Mystic, poet, author, and educator, **Arlene Gay Levine's** prose and poetry have found a home in *The New York Times*, an off-Broadway show, anthologies, journals, radio programs, and online. Recently her poem "The Climb" won second place in The New York Encounter 2020 Poetry Contest, judged by Dana Gioia. Her poem "Creation" was published in *For Every Little Thing* (Eerdmans, 2021). Learn more about her at [www.arlenegaylevine.com](http://www.arlenegaylevine.com).

\*A star trail is a long exposure photograph that shows the movement of stars in the night sky. The stars appear to move in the sky but it is actually the rotation of the earth that causes the perceived movement. This phenomenon could be used to build a better conceptual model of the Earth's place in the solar system, galaxy, or universe. WIKIPEDIA