

Lovers, praise me when I'm dead who has full joy possessed joy
in my own house and elsewhere

Today, *triste*, that joy I quit and you, my lively gray mount and
all you others.



Translated from the Occitan by Lisa Robertson

A Good Samaritan

Addie E. Citchens

It was hot that day, hot for the morning and hot for April and with a stickiness in the air that suggested something had to break. I was headed up the street to ask my neighbor Meech to give me a jump when I heard a scream come from the fourplex next door. Between there and Meech's was this big-ass bright-blue bouncy house leaning like it was about to fall over. Not a soul was out on the block but me and the bouncy house and that scream, and so for a moment I was tripping, thinking the bouncy house had screamed. But then a girl rumbled out of the end unit; she was around twenty with cornrows that had been in too long, and she was both juicy and droopy, like anything is when it just dropped a kid. She gripped a bundled blanket, and when I think of it now, my mind insists that the blanket and her nightgown and as well the old bummy wifebeater I wore had the same print: rows of small peach and red flowers.

"YOU," she said, like an announcement, and zoomed right at me.

I put my hand on my chest and also turned around to see if there was somebody else she might could be talking to, but this was on me.

"Help my baby," she said. "HELP."

She thrust the bundle at me. Off rip, I noticed the baby's color



for guidance. Mario handed Miriam a folded fax. "You have been invited to meet with Opa." Grace so overwhelmed Miriam that she half stood and staggered toward Hannel, who flinched in her clutches.

Opa Jörg's summons was so urgent that Miriam left the Hof barefoot; when he noticed, on the drive to Kingston, he was delighted, and distracted the hostess of the Comet Diner so that Miriam could tiptoe in his wake.

He ordered from a waitress who had no idea who he was; this upended Miriam. The gravitational center of her world was a mere satellite in others. She wondered what the waitress wondered, serving an old suspended giant and a barefaced, barefoot young woman. She worried the knot of her kerchief while Jörg bantered before concluding, "So life is not so bad after all."

Miriam grew embarrassed. Something in him deflected argument,

deflected even curiosity; she would say or suppress anything to keep him grinning at her.

"I want to be happy," she began. Where next? She claimed this whenever admonished, and it was true but still wrong.

"You begin a sentence 'I want,' then you will not be happy," he said. "You cannot be so friendly with the Devil. Think of your husband." Opa Jörg's intentions were clear, and duly Miriam requested that the Brotherhood administer the laying on of hands. Within the week, all five Lefebvres were moved to Twin River Run.

The soul's entry into kindergarten was acknowledged with the customary Schultüte. Stores supplied the contents; this year the children would benefit from a serendipitous closure of the Uniontown Woolworth, from which they acquired a box of dead-stock party favors in addition to three pallets of gum-barnacled gondola shelving.

The Meeting was held before the schoolhouse: the Schultüte ceremony, three autumn songs, and a prayer for Burgel Ayler, recently returned from a training in Froebel's methodology and vocally devoted to fostering the childlike spirit in her charges. Miriam knew the training to be compensatory. The year before, circa Whitsuntide, Burgel had shown symptoms of being courted: she loitered in the mail room, sang to herself, grinned unabated. Every summons from Evergreen suggested an imminent wedding, but each weekend she returned to them as a sister, not a bride. The grinning diminished. In August she was given a passport and the community's support to train in Keilhau, Germany. Now, marshaling her first kindergarten class into their classroom, could Burgel love and serve in public.

Jamie came home that afternoon and announced that his teacher was named Leg Rub, spelled backward.

Then the community sent forth young families as witness to the sanctity of life; Miriam, herding her nine-year-old and two littles, proved a telegenic Madonna. In this role, as evidence, the Lefebvres attended a weekend of pro-life fellowship in Washington, D.C.

She had never seen so many Christians together. They prayed

*Two Poems by
Timmy Straw*

Oracle at Dog

I told you the words to it oriole.
Now when an ear come

say it right.

Give the true kiss and there is
no more two faces but one stone.

Meaning how to hold a thing one loved
and how describe

custody.

If incantation is national
say a nation is

a plane of equivalences
galloping one

by one onto the blade,
a blade in sunlight, far far

offstage—there, grass and weeds,
and what,

cassette tape in the culverts
shimmering

—the song,
two dogs tethered inside—

but the scale changes,
then the key

how to hold a thing one knew
and how authority

