

Tonight I Am In Love

by Dorianne Laux

Tonight, I am in love with poetry,
with the good words that saved me,
with the men and women who
uncapped their pens and laid the ink
on the blank canvas of the page.

I am shameless in my love; their faces
rising on the smoke and dust at the end
of day, their sullen eyes and crusty hearts,
the murky serum now turned to chalk
along the gone cords of their spines.

I'm reciting the first anonymous lines
that broke night's thin shell: *sonne under wode*.
*A baby is born us bliss to bring. I have labored
sore and suffered death. Jesus' wounds so wide.*

I am wounded with tenderness for all who labored
in dim rooms with their handful of words,
battering their full hearts against the moon.

They flee from me that sometime did me seek.
Wake, now my love, awake: for it is time.
For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love!

What can I do but love them? Sore throated
they call from beneath blankets of grass,
through the wind-torn elms, near the river's
edge, voices shorn of everything but the one
hope, the last question, the first loss, calling

Slow, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears.
*Whenas in silks my Julia goes, calling Why do I
languish thus, drooping and dull as if I were all earth?*

Now they are bones, the sweet ones who once
considered a cat, a nightingale, a hare, a lamb,
a fly, who saw a Tyger burning, who passed

five summers and five long winters, passed them
and saved them and gave them away in poems.

They could not have known how I would love them,
worlds fallen from their mortal fingers.
When I cannot see to read or walk alone
along the slough, I will hear you, I will
bring the longing in your voices to rest
against my old, tired heart and call you back.