

New Poetry from Ben Weakley: “Beatitudes I,” Beatitudes II,” “Beatitudes III,” “Beatitudes IV”



THE BROKEN SKIN / *image by Amalie Flynn*

Beatitudes I.

The Lord blessed us with knowledge. Twin curses, good and evil.

Why else plant the luscious tree there, where we were bound to find the fruit? The purple and shivering flesh never lacks in spirit. The ache and growl of our naked bellies are the price

for the moment's delight. So, we gorge and the juice drips

sticky down our chins. Let angels have the eternal heaviness of paradise; ours is the moment. The act, willful and with intent.

Advised of the penalties. Done poorly. Knowing this kingdom cannot last. Looking beyond the gardens for a more convincing view of heaven.

Beatitudes II.

Are we not also blessed, we who praise
the clear night and its silence?

Betrayed by the absence of stars, we mourn
a billion-years' light no longer burning.

We whimper at the withered grass burning,
the breathing forest burning, the one
great and living ocean boiling and burning.

You who created time, who is before all things, who will remain after the ruin,
will you be waiting for us in the cool garden?

Will we lie down with you in the dew-damp grass?
Will we be comforted?

Beatitudes III.

Are the meek blessed tonight in their bundled and stinking shelters
beneath frozen bridges? Are they blessed with patience in their waiting
for the Lord of compassion? For the Lord that *suffers with*?

They suffer together. Their children will inherit the suffering

of generations,
the split lip of submission, the broken skin of the earth.

Beatitudes IV.

Blessed. From a word that meant *blood*.

Latin for *praise*. Blood and praise to the hungry; they are weak.

Blood and praise for the thirsty. For those who bathe in fetid water.

What are words

to those who hunger in a gluttonous world?

To those who thirst beside the brackish rivers,
choking on garbage? We say, wait for righteousness
to come from above. But they have starved
in their flesh so that our spirits could be filled.