Love Calls Us to the Things of This World

By Richard Wilbur

The eyes open to a cry of pulleys,  
And spirited from sleep, the astounded soul  
Hangs for a moment bodiless and simple  
As false dawn.

      Outside the open window  
The morning air is all awash with angels.

Some are in bed-sheets, some are in blouses,  
Some are in smocks: but truly there they are.  
Now they are rising together in calm swells  
Of halcyon feeling, filling whatever they wear  
With the deep joy of their impersonal breathing;

      Now they are flying in place, conveying  
The terrible speed of their omnipresence, moving  
And staying like white water; and now of a sudden  
They swoon down into so rapt a quiet  
That nobody seems to be there.

      The soul shrinks

From all that it is about to remember,  
From the punctual rape of every blessèd day,  
And cries,  
      “Oh, let there be nothing on earth but laundry,  
Nothing but rosy hands in the rising steam  
And clear dances done in the sight of heaven.”

Yet, as the sun acknowledges  
With a warm look the world’s hunks and colors,  
The soul descends once more in bitter love  
To accept the waking body, saying now  
In a changed voice as the man yawns and rises,  
      “Bring them down from their ruddy gallows;  
Let there be clean linen for the backs of thieves;  
Let lovers go fresh and sweet to be undone,  
And the heaviest nuns walk in a pure floating  
Of dark habits,
      keeping their difficult balance.”

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