

On the Existence of the Soul

By Pattiann Rogers

How confident I am it is there. Don't I bring it,
As if it were enclosed in a fine leather case,
To particular places solely for its own sake?
Haven't I set it down before the variegated canyon
And the undeviating bald salt dome?
Don't I feed it on ivory calcium and ruffled
Shell bellies, shore boulders, on the sight
Of the petrel motionless over the sea, its splayed
Feet hanging? Don't I make sure it apprehends
The invisibly fine spray more than once?

I have seen that it takes in every detail
I can manage concerning the garden wall and its borders.
I have listed for it the comings and goings
Of one hundred species of insects explicitly described.
I have named the chartreuse stripe
And the fimbriated antenna, the bulbed thorax
And the multiple eye. I have sketched
The brilliant wings of the trumpet vine and invented
New vocabularies describing the interchanges between rocks
And their crevices, between the holly lip
And its concept of itself.

And if not for its sake, why would I go
Out into the night alone and stare deliberately
Straight up into 15 billion years ago and more?

I have cherished it. I have named it.
By my own solicitations
I have proof of its presence.

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