

The Body Dances to Its Poetry

By Emily Strauss

The body dances to its poetry
and geese call across bare fields
in the dusky blue light—

tentative words dance inside us
like cottonwood leaves shaking
when the desert's breath arrives;

the sounds dance too, like cranes
in their courtship rituals hidden
in the Malheur wetlands in spring.

We vibrate with words humming
as if we become electric wires,
a susurrations arising in our dreams

then our waking at dawn to the same
flock of geese writes more words
into the body danced to exhaustion.

Sunrise, Sunset

By Emily Strauss

*All life forms on earth have evolved biological
rhythms that anticipate sunrise and sunset.*

A brittle star knows when sunset
touches the sand and becomes instantly
cold on a north sea coast, and the fog

creeps among the fresh driftwood
hiding the real night stars above.
The night crawler buried by day rises

at dusk to begin feeding on the soil
our residues, our trash, owls shake
their feathers out, twist their necks

ready for the dark hunt before day returns.
Robins sing at 5 AM, long before sunrise,
clear musical whistles in spring signaling

the end of their sleep polluted by electric
arcs, fooling them into action too soon,
as if an alarm went off by mistake.

On the cold desert in winter I sleep at sunset
the dark rising from the frozen ground
holding me in a tight fist of black ice

the sunrise holds no warmth but the pale rays
pierce my dreams, forcing open my eyes.

Silence—

By Emily Strauss

you must mean the wind
shaking the pine boughs
rushing past your ears

the faint calls of sparrows
under nameless desert shrubs,
pierced cries of hawks' flight

the hum of invisible insects
calling from a willow thicket
like insistent electric wires

a stream running under ferns
over rocks around roots
speaking softly in wet tongues

even the echo of modern
machines— the blood pulsing
in your temple you hear

from within, the sigh of skin
touching yours, footsteps
at night on a worn rug

rain like rice clattering
on canvas or a shingle roof
dripping into a puddle,

the sun waning at dusk, blue
moon sighing on a wide river
among boulders— no silence.

A Stillness Descends

By Emily Strauss

a stillness descends—
blank air, bare rock
thread of a river below
the pure sky faded white
with heat, powder-like dust
coating the willow leaves
each eddy of breeze raising
puffs of fine smoke.

Emptiness fills the day—
no speech, no thoughts
motion gone like a removal of time
and light, stepping beyond the sun,
watching the moon fade and stars depart.

Now sleep approaches,
a transition from hollow
being to lying on the blue-green
arms of the sea,
I become a thread suspended
above the horizon, a ghost with a light
in its chest, the passing wind
touches nothing.

I have become a mere path
less than air, sunlight, rain,
a wisp gone now.

Noticing

By Emily Strauss

to begin: questions without answers
the sound of wind before the firs
begin their swaying in the crown

begin with porous eyes turned
inward, then slowly pivot
keeping the body still until you
face up-river, up-canyon

and the tiny trees against the sky
at the top of the cliffs remind you
of teeth, a serrated blade edge
and you will glance down

following the clefts lower
into the canyon walls
where the water cascades
through air and sun

swallows flit and dive
for insects, a phoebe stands
on a wet rock in the stream—
and ask yourself

the impenetrable link
between your outstretched
hands and the waning day

Emily Strauss bio: Emily Strauss has an M.A. in English, but is self-taught in poetry, which she has written since college. Over 250 of her poems appear in a wide variety of online venues and in anthologies, in the U.S. and abroad. The natural world is generally her framework; she also considers the stories of people and places around her and personal histories. She is a semi-retired teacher living in California.