

KATE FALVEY

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Dorothy Almost Imagined

Dorothy, whose mind  
was differently circumstanced,  
was rude, emaciated with want  
and strange sorrows,  
wild with enthusiasm.

Dorothy was gifted  
with eyes that seemed  
to mingle with the moonlight,  
her voice, like sunshine become audible,  
like sunshine that grows melancholy  
in some desolate spot.

Dorothy's acuteness taught her  
the dance of sunshine  
reflected from moving water,  
how the lingering twilight  
was made brighter by  
the rays of a young moon.

Dorothy almost imagined  
that she could discern,  
before the winter snows were melted,  
a ruddy light, the witch-hazel  
which points to hidden gold  
where all is barren to the eye.

Dorothy set forth,  
airy gaiety extinguished  
on such a bitter night, desolate  
with many losses. A blight fell upon  
the land, cold and wintry—the cold earth  
of the grave, the cold heart beneath.

Dorothy listened  
and there was no sound, nor  
any movement, except a faint shuddering.  
Then she noted a sound  
more mournful than even that of the wind,  
a sound afar off and indistinct as if a snow-drift  
swept by with a sound like the trailing of a garment.

Dorothy at length understood  
that beautiful but shadowy images  
would sometimes be seen,  
like bright things moving in a turbid river.  
Perceiving that the apparition was life-like,  
she shook prayers dripping with half-melted snow  
from beneath a tall and lonely fir-tree.

Dorothy's entreaties echoed  
through the leafless woods.  
She was scarcely conscious  
that all except the pine-trees retained  
no trace of earlier beauty as she  
proceeded to voice her heart's anguish.

Dorothy willingly received  
the unearthly eloquence  
of light and airy voices,  
witness the spectacle of that day,  
felt surely that faith was a plant that  
would twine beautifully round  
something stronger than itself.

## ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

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“Dorothy Almost Imagined” was created from “The Gentle Boy,” a story in *Twice-Told Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1837). About the poem and the process of composing it, Kate Falvey writes:

Finding and crafting this poem from the gorgeous wordscape of my early love, Hawthorne, was a strangely fulfilling experience. I’ve never attempted the “found” form before and it’s been too many years since I’ve immersed myself in Hawthorne’s world. This was, truly, an immersive experience—and more clever minds than mine might create an interactive installation of some kind from this process.

At first, I had strict enough rules: use phrases in chronological order as I moved through the story. (And choosing a story was nostalgically engrossing.) I quickly dispensed with even this simple dictate when the poem required conjunctions, specific verb forms, pronouns, or punctuation to make even impressionistic sense.

No matter how they are strung together, the charms of Hawthorne’s words—his unmistakable voice and vision—gleam through my stanzas. Working with his words this way felt like painting with his light. It’s now hard to repress the romantic 19th century diction—which, truth to tell, I’ve always listed towards.

I’ll try “finding poems” again as a kind of meditative practice, spending quality time with beloved writers.... Maybe a Bronte mash-up next?

Kate Falvey is the author of *Morning Constitutional in Sunhat and Bolero* (Green Fuse Poetic Arts 2013), *What the Sea Washes Up* (dancing girl press 2013), and *The Language of Little Girls* (David Robert Books 2016). Her work has also appeared in *Plume*, *NonBinary Review*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Mud Season Review*, *Little Patuxent Review*, and elsewhere. She serves as an associate editor for the *Bellevue Literary Review* and lives in Long Beach, New York.

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