

First Reflection

By Steven DeLaney

“At least let me not give them illusions.”

Thomas Merton, January 24, 1961
(*Turning toward the World* 91)

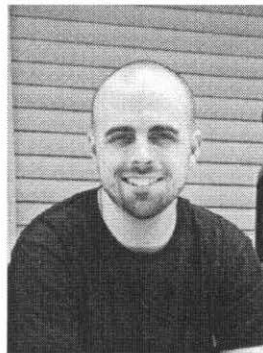
You do not know me.
I have never seen the blue folds of your Kentucky hills
the sky under whose arms you paused and prayed
prying the nails of self from yourself
so you could simply listen.
Soon the stones, the pines, the flocks of crows, the cottage
glowed of icon
sparked to the touch like the bush before Moses.

You do not know me.
The silence you documented was your own.
Yet you gave it to a lonely world.

Your gift became a season you could not control,
a way of sunlight and water
a plow upon the soil of other hearts
listening for what their
true names could be –

Like me on the train home from Boston eight years ago
when I closed your *Mountain* for the first time,
God running through me like a wild man.

I fell back into the train seat,
the book on the floor – broken open.
Every page, every word speaking my name –
and Christ – how could this happen, and here,
and to me?



Steven DeLaney

Steven DeLaney was born in Montana and grew up in Annandale, VA. He has a B.A. in History from George Mason University and an M.A. in Theology from Catholic Theological Union. He has spent the past eight years working in ministry with incarcerated and at-risk youth in inner-city Chicago. He now teaches high school in Williamsburg, VA, where he lives with his wife Allison and their son Joseph.

I turned toward the window
to this unknown
this great cloud of love
reaching across the dark of time to find its son.

What could you have known about these things?
You did not write for me . . .

Yet goodness can always give birth
no matter the distance.
Love will wait for her children,
as your book waited for me

on that train pulling a mile of passengers
and one young man at the window,
body mirrored in the glass,
 fleshed with flashing trees and stone and sky
 maybe my first true reflection,

 and in the deep distance off the tracks, hills.