

VISIO



DIVINA

The Wisdom of Contemplative Vision

FINDING THE CAT AT MIDNIGHT

PATTIANN ROGERS

Pattiann Rogers has both night-vision and day-vision of an extraordinary kind. She is a modern poet, a keen observer of the world, a spiritual visionary, a scientist and a sage. In her new book of poems, **Quickening Fields** (Penguin, 2017), she portrays the world through the astounding eyes of a modern seer whose lens adjustments have been made with the fine instrumentation of a scientist's keen and precise seeing. She looks at the world not only in the way a biologist might, however, but she also sees it through the lens of her own heart. She observes it through the faith she has in its profound goodness.

As I read her poetry, I am struck over and over again, not only by her precise language and clarity but also by the depth and mystery she perceives in the world. That world, for her, is suffused with beauty and also with the power of a spiritual force that is able to lift the human spirit beyond its own narrow, human limitations so as to perceive the world both intimately and cosmically. With guidance it is possible to see things from a place of deep kardial knowing that give us unparalleled access to the mysterious details of the world around us.

To read her poetry is to be both grounded in this "real world" of the natural order, and transported into depths of immanence and heights of transcendence. She must be read carefully and experienced individually and personally.

There is an extraordinary scene in her poem *Finding the Cat in a Spring Field at Midnight* that exhibits her prowess as a poet, a seer, and a lover of the natural order. One could hardly put the images and scenes

together more perfectly to match her this-world seeing of such a drama in the grasses of the prairie-world at night. Her telling is both cosmic and earthy, poignant, and transporting.

Many of us know a familiar house-cat that goes out alone and stalks the fields and neighborhoods at night, only to deposit some caught-creature at our doorstep? We've perhaps wondered about the drama of that moment, and perhaps even mourned the mouse or the bird that was left as "gift" or "prize" by the creature that we call our "friend." Where does the cat go? What happens and where does the field end, or the mouse and the cat begin? Where do you fit into the seeing of that night-scene?

In this poem the world of the cat's night-time adventures is shot-through with starlight and the cosmos. It is touched by the moon at midnight—the soft patterns of light that fall like a blanket across the fields of earth. The mouse, the frog, the cricket (and even we in our sleep and unaware), are part of the patterns that both blanket and pierce our world. Aware or unaware, where do we end and the cosmic shining light begin—and where does it end? Whose life belongs to whom? Whose life and light are we? Do we truly know?

Pattiann Rogers is a contemporary poet whose life has been spent exploring the world with her scientist husband and teaching young poets to write in various colleges and universities. She has published multiple volumes of poetry and currently lives with her family in Colorado.

Reflections on Image and Text:

1. *Pattian Rogers takes us with her into a field at midnight. Like a denizen of the tall grasses she explores the sights and sounds and the activities stirring around her. What do you yourself hear, see, and learn from her poem?*
2. *Have you ever been in a scene similar to this? Have you felt the natural world the way she feels it? What have been your own experiences? Describe them.*
3. *How does her poem make you feel? What do you sense that perhaps you have never sensed before?*
4. *Notice the interesting structure of this poem—the beginning, the middle, and the ending. Notice that we are always somewhere in the middle of things no matter where we are. Sit and observe your own middle ground. Where are you? Be like the poet. What can you describe?*
5. *What is the purpose of the cat? Is the cat an intruder? Are you ever like a cat in a scene like this? How?*
6. *Pattiann is clear about the oneness (or unity) of being. The cosmos in all of its myriad details is woven together into a whole. How are do you see yourself being part of this oneness? What is your sense of this? When do you sense this unity most?*
7. *What does contemplating the image help you to see and feel in the poem? Have you ever witnessed the world in a way that is similar to this image? Describe it and journal your reflections about that unique experience.*

A Place for Notes and for Journaling your Answers:

This reflection, text and its illumination have been provided by Alison Hine and Lynn Bauman as a means for contemplative prayer and imaginal vision..

LECTIO DIVINA

The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text

*F*INDING THE CAT IN A SPRING FIELD AT MIDNIGHT

It takes a peculiar vision to be able to detect
precisely where

the field grasses brushed by blowing
stars and the odor of spring
in the breath of sweet clover buds
and the star-mingled calls of the toads
in the threading grasses and the paws
of the clover brushing through the field
of stars and the star-shaped crickets
in the ears of the sweet grasses
and the tail of the night flicking
through the calls of the clover and the spring
starts slinking past the eyes of midnight
and the hour of the field mouse passing
through the claws of the stars and the brushing
haunches of the weeds and the starry grasses
threading through the eyes of the mouse
and the buds of the stars calling
with the sweet breath of the field

end
and the cat begins.

—Pattiann Rogers
Quickening Fields
(*Penquin Poets*, 2017)

Contemplating
THE ILLUMINATION

