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# Hunger Wide as Heaven

Max Garland

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# Hunger Wide as Heaven

Max Garland



I'm a mad fan of the delicious, radiant poems of Max Garland. He even makes me feel closer to that old-time religion than I've felt in quite a while. There's a welcoming world here you'll recognize, as well as a wistfulness that feels perfectly pitched, leaning out to mystery. You can string his poems together in your mind, drape them from the door inside your head like a welcoming wreath, and you'll feel better walking through it.

— Naomi Shibab Nye

Kentucky bred, fed from "the faint blue source" of dawning TV in "the waning days of Methodism" — for grassroots American melancholy, Max Garland is the pure tobacco: free of poetic fashions, the wind in the linden his muse, surprised by the light that has traveled so far to find his transparent self on the dark glass of a hotel window, "a man still / in the midst of transmission," through which our transient world can be seen.

— Eleanor Wilner

Max Garland finds, in "the knottiness / of things" — wind, tree, bird, sky, water, light, a father's milk truck, a mother's perfume — a music of resilience and grace.

Simultaneously elegy and celebration, these poems explore themes of time and mortality, God and faith, memory and redemption, with a meditative serenity and urgency, in an affectionate accessible voice. For Garland, poetry is "a way to speak a loss away," to embrace, in emptiness, strength; in diminishment, desire; in loss, recovery; in hunger wide as heaven, the possibility, at least, of fulfillment. This is a beautiful, beautiful book.

— Ronald Wallace

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Max Garland was born and raised in western Kentucky, and is the author of a previous book of poems, *The Postal Confessions*, from the University of Massachusetts Press. His poems, stories, and essays have appeared in *Poetry*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Best American Short Stories*, and other journals and anthologies. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Bush Foundation, the James Michener Foundation, and the Wisconsin Arts Board. He now lives and teaches in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



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# The Pigs Hold Up the Dawn

*Los cerdos sostienen la aurora.*

—Pablo Neruda

When I had grace and beauty  
 and four fine hooves, better than a devil's,  
 quite frankly, the way things tapered to a point  
 was not unlike the flamenco's sudden strike  
 of heel on barren ground. And did I not run like driving rain  
 after long drought to the trough, and did I not feed  
 shoulder to shoulder with the greater and lesser  
 of my kind, as if the spell of hunger made us  
 sister and brother. And when the day grew warm  
 and red, and when the scent of the world rose  
 and gave the brain direction and will enough  
 to move this bulk, my body, from barn to wallow,  
 from ruined field to shadow of cedars, I was not  
 among the pillars of diligence and mirth  
 that helped the sun that grazed the world,  
 and each morning in goodness grew.

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