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For the Gardener

nothing must go to waste — not the stones
not the maggots in the manure pile
even the grubs and earwigs must labor to be beautiful

so you can offer them to the fish and the birds
as you have offered the rose to the sawfly
the corn and tomatoes to the earworms and the hornworms

not that you meant to do it
the point is that everything must nourish something
to that end you serve them all

the gypsy moth larvae crunching the maples overhead
the green aphids under the rosebuds clustered like moss
understand that the garden is the whole world

there is nothing you can do about it
each spring you will begin again visualizing the blossom uneaten
palms that blister on the spade and the stubbornness of roots

for the garden exists first in the imagination
hold the spicy smell of autumnal maples carefully in your head—
you see? already under the carpet of leaves worms feed on the dead

Claire Fanger



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The Gardener Comes Back

casting a backward glance
at the absence of the gods
she thinks she is in luck

what's happened yet is not much
the beetle stirs and last night's rain
still hangs on the evergreen

beads of crystal and jet
clink off the juniper as tiny bit
by tiny bit the creeping thyme

pulls the hoary stones apart
slowly the taut thread binding
all things draws the eye

to what forgets the gardener
not the wine red flourish nor the blue black
blazon of hollyhock

only the downy grey-white seedling's one
true leaf poking its head
through a vein in the rock

and there another bends
her attention to the soil the contour
of the downs the world the sun

emerging from the clouds she steps
wielding her knife
for something has started

spilling its seed—
the sacred is an idea
you will not need to sow it twice

Claire Fanger

Claire Fanger is a medievalist and independent scholar and author of a number of articles on medieval religion, literature and magic that have appeared in scholarly books and journals. She also has a long-standing interest in the writing of poetry (obtaining an MA in Creative Writing from Boston University in the mid-1980's) though she has only recently begun to publish any of it. Her work is forthcoming in *the Beloit Poetry Journal*. She is a keen gardener.