

Tom Moritz

ALTAR GUILD

"Oh Lamb of God
that taketh away
the sins of the world
have mercy upon us!"

hewn beams, leaded glass, and gray stone
take their coherence from the words.

my eyes are on the ferns.
that they are there above
the white, unfolded linen
(brought to the altar by attending hands)
is mysterious to me
they seem in their green reticence
to defy orthodoxy
with their gentle suasion
to remember...

how I find them in the woods
within a surging turbulence
of growth:
skunk cabbage, tiger lilies, wild grape
Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Queen Anne's Lace
like healthy apostles of disorder
they occupy themselves and each other
beneath the falling leaves
(those premature disclosures of loss)

and there the ferns appear
bending fronds in afternoon light
prescriptural, they seem to reveal
delicate parables of silence
and their rustling seems
like whispered prayer
overheard from a distance