

## Two Poems · *Frances Mayes*

### GOOD FRIDAY, DRIVING HOME

Not travelling; getting there. Traffic  
pouring into blinding light. But the fog  
looks enlightened, roiling over the hills.  
Angels might appear in a chariot  
with news of the open-ended universe.  
The groove I've worn down this road.  
Back lit sky, are houses near the coast  
blazing? My mind drags the pavement  
like a string of tin cans. There, those beautiful  
horses, six, seven, grazing along the reservoir.  
One is a palomino. Of course, of course  
they remind me. The sight, ice on the heart.  
Memory, that guerrilla keeps lighting smoky fires.  
Those lost could do worse than be recalled  
by horses in spring grass, could do worse  
than own all shaded streets, lilacs, crescent  
moon, and sailboats. Who do I think they are,  
saints, with their emblems? I'm affected by  
silvered sky, this drastic day mad with  
traffic. Years gone I memorized Donne:  
*Restore thine Image, so much, by thy grace,  
That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face.*  
Westward, westward, things in motion stay in motion.  
I roll down the window, watch for cars swerving  
to the wrong lane. So many of us alone. Compact.  
Good mileage. We fail and can tell ourselves nothing.  
We break apart and invent  
why. We place our faith. Lose track. Blinker flashing,  
keep left. I am totally emptied and must  
fill myself again. The racing of powerful,  
unlovely emotions. What is the endless world?  
Comes around again the cusp of summer.

I still like linen. Peach colored linen. I think  
 of tanning my legs. I feel the word *prayer*  
 in my mind. Just the word. A smooth river stone.  
 I'm accomplishing the miles to San Francisco  
 for the thousandth time, add them to my *vita*.  
 I'm better off than Mona's mother with her hair  
 in curl papers thirty years, waiting for the occasion.  
 I have occasion. Press on. Oh soul of mud.  
 Half of what sacrifice ransoms us?

### WHEN RAIN PULLS THE WIND OFF THE ARNO AT NIGHT

Thunder booms through the house like waves boom  
 at sea when the mast is a twig, booms  
 like the avalanche that took Vera at Annapurna,  
 riveting her blue jacket to a crevice of ice,  
 booms like my father's voice warning  
 me not to bathe when it thunders,  
 lightning waits to strike girls  
 with pearly toes and sunburned shoulders, and  
 will split the room, lift the porcelain tub  
 and my white hide to the sky;  
   a flash divides  
 the night in my closed eyes, the sky  
 a bare dendritic slide of winter birch—  
 what long roots dangle. I hold my breath.  
 But isn't it good, the gigantic storm?  
 Waking to the flood of terror they felt  
 by fires in the caves? I find a match  
 but the candle displaces the dark  
 only half way up the wall. I ricochet home—  
 heat lightning in the South. I used to  
 lie on the ground letting rain  
 soak through me, feeling each bright  
 burst of forked silver.  
 Quick wind parts the bedroom shutters,