

ASTONISHMENT
By Galway Kinnell

There is a silence in the beginning.
The life within us grows quiet.
There is little fear. No matter
how all this comes out, from now on
it cannot not exist ever again.

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The present pushes back the life of regret.
It draws forward the life of desire. Soon memory
will have started sticking itself all over us.
We were fashioned from clay in a hurry,
poor throwing may mean it didn't matter
to the makers if their pots cracked.

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On the mountain tonight the full moon
faces the full sun. Now could be the moment
when we fall apart or we become whole.
Our time seems to be up—I think I even hear it stopping.
Then why have we kept up the singing for so long?
Because that's the sort of determined creature we are.
Before us, our first task is to astonish,
and then, harder by far, to be astonished.

We come to be astonished. To be reminded that the world—this life—is still full
of astonishing things: unexplainable acts of goodness, stunning beauty,
impossible hope.

We come because we need—every one of us—to fall to our knees from time to
time, in wonder. In awe.