

A spring day like this

how yellow the air is

Carol Frost

And here's the elephant in the room: beauty
and all that trails after it, all that is
imbedded in it: a waxing moon, a waning moon,
the mountain, chasm, mudflat, wetland, the river
slithering down and through a valley full of trees,
cliffs and crags and mangrove swamps; and my favourites,
the fierce beauty of a breaking wave, the brilliance
of the sun coming up even more than the sun going down;
the colour burst of spring, the purple jacaranda, a yellow
winter wattle bloom ...

flowers picked this morning and arranged
in a vase, ornamental carp – red, silver, gold –
circling beneath a bridge, the skill that turns a colour field –
a heap of steel, a carved stone – into something different,
made, the mysteries of music tapping at the ear, the sentence
that takes your breath away ...

that fades but doesn't pall;
a tree ecstatic with the raucous flutter of birds,
a bank of darkening cloud swelling to the south,
the sudden pelt of rain; Venus, Helen, Adonis, James Dean,
a tiger stalking through bamboo, Muybridge's horse;
fire, inferno, Christ on the cross; what, unknowingly,
we are trained to see, which flouts the rules,
which is reason's resting place; the eye of Hokusai
getting better as he aged ...

beauty that blinds,
that is in the eye, the act of seeing which makes a moment
substance which can be shared, which can't
be shared, not really, though words may be passed around;
beauty which is a puzzle, but no secret, which prevails
despite our claims; moments which come and go
and come again, that are more than momentary,
more than a distraction ...

from the ugliness that abounds,
beauty which looks back at us, tells us who we are,
the fitness of this goes with that which might explain the world
but can't; concord teetering on the edge of discord,
pleasure not always unalloyed, compromised by words
like 'nature', 'culture', 'spirit', 'soul', by an unwillingness
to let go. That 'the most beautiful is the most just'
is Delphic and untrue ...

but still. Long after my father-in-law
lost his speech to Alzheimer's, when we were crossing
Sydney Harbour in early evening light,
out of the blue he spoke one word: 'beautiful' ...