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Acrophobia

Robert W. Cosgriff

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Acrophobia

by Robert W. Cosgriff

Not for me places high and sheer
With their beautiful views of sure death.
I would not be a sea-cliff bird
Unconcerned to ledge precariously
High above uncompromising sea
For some fragile egg's sake;
Nor hawk (like Hopkins' windhover)
Drawn to escarpment's vertiginous edge
To channel air beneath wide-stretching wings,
There to hang hunting over the void.
I do not seek the nakedness of ascent
Or any summit's cold exposure —
Both being morally imperative
We are told at every step,
And climax worth the climbing's cost.
The dubious honor of high places
I'll leave to others — and the descent,
Whether misstep-swift or worse,
The slow death of coming back to earth.
Reason enough to wish my head
To be the highest thing around.
Horizon being what I see from where I stand;
And to prefer prairie over precipice,
Wetland over waterfall, riverbank
Over any spindly, dizzying bridge above.

