

# Toward Light

Sarah Day

I whisper something to you  
about the humility of the church window, the way the lower third  
opens, like a kitchen window, on a simple casement hinge;  
Spanish mission you murmur in the dimness, without turning  
from the fado singer at the altar. We're inside an antipodean Vermeer –  
in the sepia voice and reflected light and in the simple geometry  
of the half circle in the top third of the window frame.

Without the assurance of the senses, what is reason?  
The movement of the eye towards light stirs such promise:  
a garden path towards the morning sun through silhouette  
of fig, grevillea and loquat leaf. Or light on the Southern Ocean  
glimpsed through aperture of tea-tree corridor;  
light permeates shadow, a camera obscura. The ocean's spaciousness  
enters the prickly bower.

The light at the end of the tunnel's a familiar trope  
for hope or faith or birth and death. The transparency of shadow –  
the way light bounces through, illuminates a dogwood leaf,  
a cherry plum; unsentimental, this walking towards light.  
Not the arrival, not the blaze of daylight beyond the portal  
out of the dark on the downhill track to the foaming swell,  
but the momentary equilibrium, parenthesis of arching tree-light.

The fado singer in the church sings for what is past and gone:  
a melancholy longing in the major key,  
but the light from the window transports us forwards in time.  
Sometimes the dead come back to life and speak  
of avenues to light. Kant said that the beautiful is limited  
but the sublime is infinite,  
that we feel pain in the failure to imagine what cannot be imagined

and pleasure in the attempt.\*  
Some hunger's met in the threshold – this elation  
in light's diffusion, the way everything leads  
in a forest path overhung with banksia or  
a shimmering head-high symphony of xanthorrhoea,  
to the vanishing point where light will expand,  
where light wants the eye to go.

\* Immanuel Kant (from *Critique of Judgement*)