

Borgund Stave Church, midsummer

by [Diane G. Scholl](#) in the [October 20, 2009](#) issue

Listen, you cannot hear the small bells
rung for mass, or smell the pungent
incense. No one is selling tickets at this hour;
nothing is open here at the earth's edge
where sheep block the road, and torrents
pour from the stony mountain. Above
the shrouded dead, tar-soaked timbers
with their pitched roofs sky-dive bravely
toward the stratosphere. Jet-lagged,
we wake to a world spilled open
into white and cloudless sky.

Flowers, yellow, purple, white, the one
called "stepmother," crouch like pansies
underneath the gallery floor. All day
we have been driving near the sound of water,
the cry of unfamiliar birds. Now we are tired.
Your foot, then mine, tests the sagging steps
for rot; your eye, then mine, pries through
the worn keyhole. Both of us think
we will never be back. Your hand, then mine,
refrains from touching the carved lintel
with its snakes and dragons out of fear
it might dissolve, and like so many things,
our faces flushed, our bodies warm from walking,
just disappear into thin air.