

# 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.