

Lorna Crozier

A New Religion

(after Philip Larkin's "Water")

If I were called in
to construct a new religion
I should make use of cats.

Several would have fur
between their toes—Himalayans perhaps—
so they could re-enact the miracle
and walk on snow
without falling through.

In schools of theology
cats would teach
prayers of purring, priests in training
laying hands on one another's bellies,
feeling at last
the warm wheels of devotion
whirring inside the flesh.

Churches would be praised for
mouse-infested vestries,
and during communion
wine would soon give way
to blood.

In every parish,
there'd be a jersey cow
grazing among the graves,
and the sermons too often
would focus on Jesus
never running out of fish.

All services would be held
after sunset, in candlelight,
those strange eyes staring
through the dark
past the pews and pulpits,
seeing what the congregation
hopes to see.

Best would be the cats
in their constant
comings and goings—
doors in every place of worship
opened, then shut; opened, then shut—
reminding the doubters, the righteous
and the less-than-holy,
of the soul's
restless journeys
away from and back to the world.