

POETRY | SPRING 2020

Where Are You, Mary Oliver?

By Katharine Lawrence

When I was young, you showed me the river
behind my house.
Not for what it was—
a small, thready thing
moving from the old pump house through tall grasses and
skunk cabbage, white-striped and green and pungent,
disappearing into light-dappled forest
—but for what it might be.
Arrowheads emerged, and frogs,
as cool earth swirled to my ankles
the river plumbed my body, the fields swept on behind
and afternoon dragonflies surveyed their territory.

Where are you, Mary Oliver?
It has been so long since we touched the world,
and all around us is plague.
It's hard to hear your voice on the empty streets, old pavement,
the hospital ward.
I miss the earthworms.
I'm looking to the tree buds
to give a sign that better things are
emerging.
I put my ear to the ground
but all I hear are sirens.

Katharine Lawrence is an internal medicine physician living and working in New York City. Her writing and poetry has been featured in the Annals of Internal Medicine, Academic Medicine AM Rounds, in-House, and KevinMD.

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