

Testimony (for my daughters)

Rebecca Baggett, from *Women's Uncommon Prayers*

I want to tell you that the world
is still beautiful.
I tell you that despite
children raped on city streets,
shot down in school rooms,
despite the slow poisons seeping
from old and hidden sins
into our air, soil, water,
despite the thinning film
that encloses our aching world.
Despite my own terror and despair.

I want you to know that spring
is no small thing, that
the tender grasses curling
like a baby's fine hairs around
your fingers are a recurring
miracle. I want to tell you
that the river rocks shine
like God, that the crisp
voices of the orange and gold
October leaves are laughing at death,

I want to remind you to look
beneath the grass, to note
the fragile hieroglyphs
of ant, snail, beetle. I want
you to understand that you
are no more and no less necessary
than the brown recluse, the ruby-
throated hummingbird, the humpback
whale, the profligate mimosa.
I want to say, like Neruda,
that I am waiting for
"a great and common tenderness",
that I still believe
we are capable of attention,
that anyone who notices the world
must want to save it.