

ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT

by CJ Scruton

for Illuminations by Leslie Fedorchuk

Mothers and sons of god wore gold crowns of light, I was told.
I was told all nightshades of the garden were unclean,
taught to pray a wish to the oldest potatoes in the pantry
lest their unholy greenness strike us down.
I've lost more names than I've gained.
But I'm certain you remember.
You respond *lysimachia clethroides*,
you pronounce *geranium maculatum*
immaculate every time
and I wrap my tongue dead wrong around each one
that stung my ankles as a child.
Heat takes away more hurt than time,
I've learned. No one told me *apocalypse*
meant *the opposite of lying*, that *revolution*
meant not *forward* but *turn*. I lie
on my back in every art gallery I visit
like a kid in a field,
like I used to think I'd see what plants see
if I stared directly into the sun.
I'll figure out everything, I thought.
No, really, I swear, I'll figure out everything.