

Robert West

To Jeff Daniel Marion

Reading your poems about
your father, pondering how
they weave in and out of your
portrait of these abiding
mountains, I wonder what you
now make of death. Twenty years
ago I watched my father's
father begin his last and
longest vigil beneath a
Blue Ridge valley, walked away
in a wind unconsoling
and cold. Heard the preacher's half-
credible promise, but was
deaf to the too-familiar
hills, their boast of victory
over gravity, blind to
the marriage they'd already
made of earth and sky. These days
I've strayed long enough from high
country to marvel at what
these landscapes testify: that
the preacher's words were worth more
than wind, that blessed are those
who lie down among mountains.

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