

## **Row, Row, Row...**

Its rabbit-ears prick up, tuned to the light  
that's breaching the palpable sky. Shallowest  
of flowers, the iris creeps across the water,  
wavers. Look: how perfectly it mimics  
its original. I say *original*  
but only feel this breeze that's blowing now.  
A silent picture hazarded in flux,  
a reverie reflected in my face,  
the iris now unsettles, now reforms.

**(The deathless poem will be made of words)**

The deathless poem will be made of words,  
and those words of letters, and those letters,  
    in their turn, of indelible  
    atoms suitably mixed  
with void. There is the trouble, the void,  
the emptiness that leaves room  
    for motion. Give an atom  
    room and it will swerve,  
unpredictably. It may  
not seem like much, a single atom  
    swerving, but it compounds  
    faster than you'd think.  
That is why nothing fashioned from matter  
lasts forever, not even the goddess  
    who has so kindly given  
    me these few words.  
Do not be afraid, Felicity.  
Death is nothing to us – nothing.

### Scene (3)

Beyond your window, earthen notes: the chirr  
Of a weed-eater (the grass a froth); the swell  
Of cars, waves crashing on rocks, falling back;  
Crickets, ceaseless, heard in the slight gaps.  
At the quietest, even the trees, shuddering.  
Have you heard? Nor the finger, nor the eye  
Reaches. Lay your hand on the silver maple —

The moon, eclipsed by Green Tree's water tower,  
Emerges, shining dimly down on fog-  
Occluded trees, then sinks under the glare  
Of the rising sun. In its feebleness, the moon  
Seems gossamer, as if this conspiracy  
Of angles had penetrated right to the substance  
And sapped it, and, what do you know, maybe it did.

Above you, water is cascading down  
A meager falls. Beside it, dulled to brown,  
Hang the snapped stems of once-lush greenery,  
Now growing only a thick coat of ice  
From water that, jubilant in descent,  
In droplets dances upwards, catches, holds,  
Never reaching the bullfrog dead below.

A mirror shatters in gravel, each fragment  
Reflecting fragments of the whole you feel  
That you are not (such as that waterfall  
In Alabama, the tree that, just beyond  
The cascade's reach, clings to the rock, its roots  
Suspended gladly in air, its branches ghosts,  
Gasping in spray), except for those face-down.

Or else the water black with tadpoles, the mud  
Squirring with frogs. Transience! "What a bargain!"  
A jocose voice cries out, though it goes on  
To treat it in dead earnest. No, it says,  
That is how the gift must work: a purchase,  
Paid for with the losing. So why *gift*?  
The funny thing, it says, concerning words...

Time, ever stranging, deserts you, wanders off  
In indecision, resembling a multitude  
Of crows that, from a single tree, badger  
The sun to wakefulness on a winter morning  
Only to, later that same day, shout it down  
From its perch, until one final constant remains:  
The dog that's always barking in the loom.

You tried to weave this tightly, but you failed:  
The threads are tenuous, and draggle stragglers  
That obscure the pattern (assuming *pattern*  
Is really the just word), waiting to catch  
On the gnawed-on branches you're now stretching out  
And unravel. – yes, lay your hand on the silver maple:  
You will only feel the distance the more.