

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.