PEARL

For in my nature I quested for beauty, but
God, God hath sent me to sea for pearls.
—Christopher Smart

The hiss of *kiss* and *celebrate*
is the most lonely and desolate
thing in the world Ten years from now
questions will be asked and discarded
unanswered As if worries
had tied themselves in knots
As if sorrow cut your bowels to pieces

Once I thought I could never fall in love
That the decision was somehow beyond me
Once I thought light was kind because
it engraved an image of you on my eye
The dizzying spotlight we shine
on the unconscious reveals much
that is foul minimal forged in desire

The problem is decoration is expression
The problem is not obvious
This world is so much ocean
Even the Gods of English formed
a language so fluid it has washed
back for centuries over their words and faces
Blurring images shifting rhyme
and sound like sand

This is my lament
Pick a new obsession
Yes I love you So what?
What prevents me from weeping?
I feel my face adopt and discard
expressions as if they were tissues
or over-ripe plums
Unkempt Disheveled Slovenly
Not remote Not dainty

Happiness enrages me and you
are wrong to require it of me
Things worn next to skin
like perfume lingerie the body
of a lover cannot clothe the heart
in anything that will protect it
but resignation can

A spasm of dread so intense
The remainders of you have been
discarded Disposed Dispossessed
When this life is consolidated
into a graceful intensity I will sit
quietly in distress Scared and wistful

Some brave people wise enough
to distrust water still trust
the boats they set upon it
The Sea of Crises and The Sea of Cold
cannot be drowned in
I despise water O sweetheart O
my dream Though I remain
your admirer in eternity It's not as if
you were my precious pearl

Some groans are ripped from a place
you didn't know existed
Twice I passed beyond despair
into desolation and once
I left desolation for that place
beyond groans I worry that the souls
inhabiting us are brittle spectres
afraid to desert the protection
offered by a body Sometimes I hear
the loose nervous rattling

of my soul inside its shell
Fellow Traveler How shall I salute you
A handshake a spasm a nod