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4 a.m.

John Samuel Tieman

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JOHN SAMUEL TIEMAN

4 a.m.

I

like a leaf which wishes to drop
at the foot of the tree and become, for the sake of the tree, some small feast
there is a life I long to give back
like Li Po folding his poems and floating them downstream only to be
retrieved by someone who loved poems perhaps or paper boats or just Li Po
there is something I wish to give my wife, something which is neither
yowl nor vow

II

my wife speaking in her sleep
speaks in a secret language like English but a glossolalia
known only to her and God and
me as I marvel
my wife breathing in when
she stops and for 7 seconds I know all there is to know
about love and the meaning of love and loss and all there is to lose
and she breathes again and again I know God
by her silence, for example, how my wife's silence is then
how my wife's 4 a.m. silence is all I need of silence and God's gift of silence
which is to say
her skin amid all the dark