

John Donlan / TWO POEMS

PEASANT LIFE

You long to touch the sacred object but the vision
of paint and gilt flaking under your finger, falling
from the darkened wood restrains you. And
isn't watching TV evangelists somehow the same,

or at least as good? That woman's a fool; she won't
live on a man. They met at a dance near the card catalogue
and vanished into another century, intoxicated
with pheromones, evading dark media fantasies

in favour of deeper meanings words can't hold.
The Silver Maples' scarlet flower cases
burst with possibility, a crammed engagement book
flings open its pages, recovering

the sweet lost holiness entombed
in objects of desire. You yearn for these things
even as they ignore you, one of nature's gentlemen
coaxing a chipmunk with food you forgot to bring.

SLEEP

A rattle of ladders in the alley wakes you
to make love in a crib with one side down
by a high open window, the awful drop
if you forget where you are. That was after

you conquered falling at last by letting yourself fall
without fear, so that you never land but shift
back to the clear interval of bedsheets
and daylight, where there is so much control

you dive into another breaker.

The Sea Queen swims to meet you, but her stove
can't be repaired until you find your toolbox, you're
late for the examination, you didn't know

you were taking this course, you didn't go to class
all year. The freedom of empty halls seduces you
past the sweating desks, the rows of papers
on which everyone wants to write the same answer.