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Giving In

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GIVING IN

Like a last look
a skull full of thorns
in the center of a meadow,
and the scratching of bird claws
covering the sockets with dust,
and the veiled woman
lifting the dark gauze to look:

Death takes the backroads,
the harvesters beside
the glinting arc of sickles,
the shortcuts off cliffs,
and the dreamer who jolts awake
to his fingers drumming
the dank sheets of a bed.

Like moving targets
the dead man down moves on
among us; out of the corners
of our eyes the shadowy motion.
Behind our backs, tapping to get in,
the moths return
to the light of our fires.

The dead give in to the living
by slow degrees, stubborn
to be born again of a dormant shape
born of the breather's hands.
After the grief of a darker night,
the mourners give in to living
and the rising bones reply.