

from "Scattered Psalms" (in *Dead Men's Praise*)

IX (LOOKING THROUGH THE WINDOW: PSALM 121)

I will lift up my eyes to the mountains, where my help will come; my help from God, who makes heaven and earth

Psalm 121:1-2

Was it Jonathan Edwards who'd repeat, continually,
One verse from the Song of Songs for the entire day?
I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley.

He believed that, in the repetition,
He could hear Christ's voice replace his own.
And while a god who'd use that kind of self-description

Would put me off – mine asks sarcastic questions
Like *Where were you when I laid earth's foundations?* –
I'm also given to wild expectations.

Here's my secret: help does come
When you invoke it with the hills or even hum
The melody for that one bit of psalm.

It's the sheer idea of lifting up your eyes,
The heady speculation that the mountains rise
Purely for the sake of lifting us,

As if the endless business of creation
Required even our participation.
But wouldn't we know it? It's a wild notion;

Besides, it's no mean trick to lift your eyes
And I've been making an untenable promise
In my impatience to repeat the phrase

That requires nothing of me: *help will come* ~
It is an extraordinary claim –
I will lift my eyes to the mountains – pure momentum

Could make anything happen after that –
Unless it's part of a triumvirate:
Lifted eyes, my help, the mountains' height –

All approximations for the undiluted
And various emergences of God
A little like gas and liquid and solid

Versions of something wholly without substance.
But then - is it my failing? - there is a chance
That all I'll ever know of pure deliverance

It these blue-white mountains out my window
Still reeling from this morning's blast of snow.
They're uncannily beautiful without the Hebrew

So why don't I leave well enough alone?
Surely it's enough: a diamond-studded mountain.
Why insist on making it a stand-in

For what, if we could lift our eyes, we'd see?
(What help do I need? What is wrong with me?)
A lifted eye, a lily of the valley.