

Jack Gilbert – “A Stubborn Ode”

All of it. The sane woman under the bed with the rat
that is licking off the peanut butter she puts on her
front teeth for him. The beggars of Calcutta blinding
their children while somewhere people are rich
and eating with famous friends and having running water
in their fine houses. Michiko is buried in Kamakura.
The tired farmers thresh barley all day under the feet
of donkeys amid the merciless power of the sun.
The beautiful women grow old, our hearts moderate.
All of us wane, knowing things could have been different.
When Gordon was released from the madhouse, he could
not find Hayden to say goodbye. As he left past
Hall Eight, he saw the face in a basement window,
tears running down the cheeks. And I say, nevertheless.