

the fog

Elisabeth Richardson

“And the bow shall be in the cloud;
and I will look upon it, that I may remember . . .”

but then when I was crazy
broken exiled to the downtown dark
hidden in a red brick fist of space
between the sanctuary of First Presbyterian
and the seedy entryway to Chez Pierre
the soggy air was not a token or a sign
the divine made tangible
not an anointing kiss
on my lids and lashes
not water in its spirit form
immersing me
it was just a sodden fallen
God-forsaken cloud
a smudged stupor of despair
that veiled the moon
and my pale prayers
that thickened every thread that I had on
with wet
breached every cell with frost
and made me forget
the possibility of warmth
the hope of warmth
or deliverance

that third night of five
spent speechless faithless barely alive
only feeling real
with the slats of bench to underline my length
I didn't know yet
that as bad as it got (and would get)
it could have been much worse
I didn't know yet that I'd been heard
and given strength to make it through
to dawn
that the silence was response repose
a chance to know the grace of extremity
the bench that I was on a pew
in the sanctum of the elements
and I an answered supplicant
wrapped and protected
in the sacrament
of the airborne dew