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Excerpts from "Morning, Noon, and Night"

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Charles O. Hartman

from MORNING NOON AND NIGHT

Syzygy

Rain and the idea of rain stroll arm in arm up the coast.
Who cares what anybody thinks? They could tear off
their different kinds of clothes and leap into the sea,
disporting. They could lie down together in a church.
If they were made they were made for each other. If they had
families
their families would bury idols to put them right. Under the
moon's light
the sea lies under their conjoined ministrations calmed,
all its larger projects dissolved in their millioning.
They love each other more perfectly than you. They have
no secret, they are a secret. No one can see them both at the same
time.

Offering

The salt is on the table, and in the bread, and in every mouthful
of sea.
Salt glistens among rocks above high tide, it stings
in the eyes of the divers and the bites of insects, it sticks
skin to skin in siesta and films every seaward surface of glass.
Its savor is in no danger, its word is on every tongue.
On the hills the goats lick it from their own coats.
It tans the hides of the old, beginning when they're young.
Here's a good pinch — he said — take it,
rub it between your fingers, rub it into your palm with your
thumb,
blow it into the air, it sparkles all the way to the ground.
That's what nobody can live without.

Glimpse

Sleep — sleep for such as us — he says —
is a page of words stretching in all directions
without end, although our ability to sample it,
nap by nap even over a whole life, is circumscribed.
The wonder is that any time we are set down on it
we are set down in a new place, or almost every time,
there's barely moment enough to figure out which way
the words are running before we're taken up again
like divers letting their last air buoy them back above,
yet we come back regularly with quite marvelous stories
gleaned in a glimpse. It is also striking to me — he says —
that though we hear from each other of familiar passages
we almost never meet anyone there, except the dead.
I suppose it's just that there are so many more of them.