

# *Reprise for a Memory*

ASKOLD SKALSKY

— after Donald Justice

I ask you to come back now as you were in October,  
elegant, lithe, the auburn hair upswept with a topknot of tulle.  
Let it be as though I could tramp backwards through time,  
effacing the winter that did and did not matter much,  
or came to just one more luminous nightfall.

Sit with me as you did then, after the first touch  
when words lost their toil with oblivion, fluent  
like mint-fresh verse, for who could speak of these things  
but in silence? (a line could make you thoughtful with grace:  
your eyes showed it.)

I see you turn again toward the distant yellow sea  
of leaves, the shadows passing over the sunset-sloped  
dusk of the hills while the wind paints unseen figures  
on the glass. Your lips tremble a little.

What season was that?

Stop me if I recall it too clearly, but was there  
not a reverie that we shared, pure but desperate,  
in which you played Eurydice, and I asked you to follow,  
and you hesitated, perhaps knowing what to expect, and of course  
I turned, twice.

Come back now and help me with this absence.  
Breathe to me the secret sound of rain that you remember  
from that night.