

frozen word

this child likes to pray at night, i am told.
i kneel beside him, his bed an altar,
his requests unintelligible to me, except in snatches.
jesus. mommy. daddy. amen.

once
i listened to this child with reverence,
with longing, desiring to love You first
without ego.
i longed not to desire answers or evidence, i longed
not to think about now,
i longed to come to You like a child,
like this child,
unfettered by grief, filled
with joy.

and this child remains forever beside me,
forever redeemed, forever
unintelligible, and
forever removed
from me
and from my grief, grief which asks questions,
does not trust, which seeks itself, and which taints
the memory
of a child on his knees.

for i'm a child no longer, and
tender memories curl up at the edges
like leaves in autumn,
when death begins to stalk the weak,
the temporal, and
coming to You now is like
a leaf in autumn, which
knows it is stalked, decaying, and
dying,
and yet
is unable to go on living
because dying
is what leaves do in autumn.

i am hardened
by this prologue to winter,
by the burial of Your word
deep beneath the freezing soil,
where autumn leaves decay and will continue
to decay.

--Shannon Hicks