

The Bear As Monk

He lines his cloister cell with leaves,
in preparation for the days
when the sun's low arc will light up the woods
like a pale candle burning in the dark.

Then, faithful to some inner chime
in the belltower of his brain,
one day he ambles toward the spruce
under whose upturned roots he will slumber,

eddyng flakes catching
in his thick, burly cowl of a coat
as he drowsily flatfoots it
through a world turning white.

He's fasted now for several days ..
The last of the autumn feast is voided.
His belly shrunk, a final beggar's fare
of leaves, pine needles, his own hair,

will plug his hollow bowels up till spring.
He backs his fat-slabbed girth into the hole,
hunches up in the earthen womb, dozes.

Now through the cold his brain will hum like honeybees
massed for warmth, giving off dream's faint exhaust
like prayers whispered in the ear of God.