

## ROOSTER

Tomorrow, since I have so few,  
and Tomorrow, less dramatically,  
and Tomorrow any number of times.  
As for renouncing, isn't that  
the oldest?

Rooster crowing: dark blue velvet  
that knows itself too well—  
empty wallet, busted heart—  
Oh yes, my very good friend,  
a voice searching for orchids,  
that dances alone.

And then for that one hour  
there are no familiar faces:  
this lovely, misbegotten animal  
created from odd bits of refuse  
from minute to minute  
splits us down the middle.

*I love two rooster poems. Bishop's was the first one I ever read, all rural and gunmetal, and tin. The second one I discovered was this one. Both poems are like meditative openings, filled with blues, with violet hours, that ooze into this gorgeous puddle. But with Jim's rooster poem, and why I return to it so often, the rooster is without a doubt a partner in crime to time, the marking of time, age; the bird and the poet soaked in the beating of the world. When a poem can "split me down the middle" into something I was before reading the poem and something I am after reading the poem, I return to it. I leave it in the open for good.*

- Jordan Stempleman