

## Winter Barley

When I make beer, soaking  
pounds of sprouted grain  
to pull out sweetness, tossing  
wads of flowered hops  
into the boil, our whole house  
filling with a tang of bitter steam—  
I always think of Jesus,  
who might have loved a beer  
with his disciples, some last night  
drinking and discussing awe, easily,  
since beer is wine and bread in one body.  
Here in Oregon the wheat grows in winter,  
barley too, slowly and greenly rising  
through the spring. And summer nights  
with friends, hours when our words soak  
in unremembered conversation,  
joy fluttering like empty bottles—  
it's easier to be the last one up,  
to walk alone some bridge or field,  
leave your phone awake beside you,  
like that year I knew a friend  
troubled even unto death,  
who might want to call. Her silence  
on the line like a parable of bourbon.  
Then late November, when no-one  
answers the long dial tone—  
god might just be outside, in the rain,  
planting next year's wheat.

*Erik Jonah*