

## Two Poems · *Donald Hall*

### THE COFFEE CUP

The newspaper, the coffee cup, the dog's  
impatience for his morning walk:  
These fibers braid the ordinary mystery.  
After the marriage of lovers  
the children came, and the schoolbus  
that stopped to pick up the children,

and the expected death of the retired  
mailman Anthony "Cat" Middleton  
who drove the schoolbus for a whole  
schoolyear, a persistence enduring  
forever in the soul of Marilyn,  
who was six years old that year.

We dug a hole for him. When his widow  
Florence sold the Cape and moved to town  
to live near her daughter, the Mayflower  
van was substantial and unearthly.  
Neither lymphoma nor a brown-and-white  
cardigan twenty years old

made an exception, not elbows nor  
Chevrolets nor hills cutting blue  
shapes on blue sky, not Maple Street  
nor Main, not a pink-striped canopy  
on an ice cream store, not grass.  
It was ordinary that on the day

of Cat's funeral the schoolbus arrived  
driven by a woman called Mrs. Ek,  
freckled and thin, wearing a white  
bandana and overalls, with one  
eye blue and the other gray. Everything  
is strange; nothing is strange:

yarn, the moon, hair coiled in a bun,  
New Hampshire, putting on socks.

### THE VALLEY OF MORNING

Jack Baker  
rises when  
the steeple  
clock strikes three  
to shape dough  
into pans  
and wed pale  
rising bread  
to the fire,  
trays shoved in  
clay ovens  
over wood  
coals. After  
the summer  
sun touches  
the church's  
steeple, he  
pulls from his  
bakestove two  
hundred loaves,  
crusted brown  
with damp fire  
inside. Now  
the valley