

THE WEDDING GUEST

Peter Morrison

Han Shan said from somewhere on his cold mountain,
Or if not, then Dogen Zenji in his *Shōbōgenzō*
Or Thich Nhat Hanh one evening in Albuquerque,

That every wedding arrives at that moment when a tiny window
Appears and opens up before the eyes of every guest
Although each wrongly thinks no one else perceives it,

And this window is entirely different from the larger one
Into which the couple themselves must gaze and everyone can see.
If it was Han Shan, then he also said in passing that for some

The window never dissolves but continues to grow, to such size
That eventually the guest falls into it and remains, as it were,
At a perpetual wedding, which must not be thought a good thing

Despite the pleasant company, the music, and the poultice
of hopefulness.
But for most nothing remotely like this happens—the windows
remain small,
The wedding unfolds in a familiar way with its predictable
anomalies,

And in time the guests come to forget nearly everything about it
Except for that brief pinhole through which for some moments
they viewed
Their own enlarged desire trembling upside down on an
opposite wall

Smoothing its dress, or pushing back loose strands of hair
 whenever the guest does
In her discreet effort to confirm that she really does see herself
 poised there
Just before running off to anyone's arms anywhere on this earth
 at all,

And closing the window behind her in a lingering shower
 of confetti.
Some maintain that the wedding guest is left with nothing, but
 this is untrue,
For everyone can plainly see the happy couple joining hands
 and kissing

And turning their smiles toward the applauding crowd arranged
 before them
In the same way those in some old paintings would were they
 allowed to.
You will ask what Han Shan said about the window seen
 by the couple

And by all the guests—those that everyone is aware of,
Like the only fan of flowers missing its garlands of ribbon,
Or the rude songbird intruding with his territorial cadenzas.

He says nothing, because nothing can be said about that,
As it is with so many things that matter most to us
And we encircle with our silence.