**When one has lived a long time alone**

When one has lived a long time alone,

and the hermit thrush calls and there is an answer,

and the bullfrog head half out of water utters

the cantillations he sang in his first spring,

and the snake lowers himself over the threshold

and creeps away among the stones, one sees

they all live to mate with their own kind, and one knows,

after a long time of solitude, after the many steps taken

away from one’s own kind, toward these other kingdoms,

the hard prayer inside one’s own singing

is to come back, if one can, to one’s own,

a world almost lost, in the exile that deepens,

when one has lived a long time alone.

*Galway Kinnell*