

One Night in February

The pillow is hard.
I pummel it over the darkness

it holds down and think it
soft and deep,

telling my bones to be still,
my heart to be still.

I meet a phrase I know.
It is *Wayland the Smith*.

His unnamed bride is young,
a river daughter

naked yet dressed in water.
It is Spring

here in my head. I turn
the pillow over.

I do not know the story
my memory knows

but try to think it through
There is iron and water,

an iron ring in the water,
a ring of water

and an April pillow.
I trouble the water

and move the pillow an inch.
It is three o'clock.

The darkness under the pillow
is heaving softly.

My wife has begun to snore.
I am being married

again in Wayland the Smith,
in the river maiden,

in the wide, slow, sweep
of the morning Rhine

between Metz and Coblenz.
This, I remember,

was in July, not April.
I shift the pillow.

—*Robin Skelton*