

## In Conversation with Milosz's "Ars Poetica?"

By Ellen Goldsmith

Poetry, you say, is a reminder of how hard it is to remain only one person. When I was a different person, the sick me, was that a narrowing of self or someone else entirely?

The door to my hospital room was always open  
and I beckoned to whoever walked by,  
doctor and patient alike. No one ever entered.

\* \* \*

A swirl of selves. The-getting-sick-me surprised  
at how hard it was to unload the dishwasher.  
The me in the doctor's office or in the CT scanner,  
failing every test. The empty-riverbed-me,  
accepting whatever came.

And then the coming-  
into-spring-me, thrilled by the smallest gain  
Being able to go up and down three steps.

\* \* \*

As I look at the world outside my window,  
the words recovery and healing come forward  
like your *invisible guests*.

The wind moves  
everything, the thin branches of the birch,  
the needle-laden boughs of the white pine.

Like you, I aspire to *a more spacious form*.  
Perhaps a leafless tree revealing a starry sky.  
Perhaps an evergreen, steady with holding on.

---

**Ellen Goldsmith is a writer whose recent book, *Left Foot, Right Foot*, is an illness and recovery story in 28 poems. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals. Goldsmith lives in Cushing, Maine.**