

RITA DOVE

## Rain

*Ah, how could I possibly admit an infirmity in the one sense  
which ought to be more perfect in me than others?  
— Ludwig v. Beethoven, Heiligenstadt Testament*

Silver ribbons stripped loose from their implacable  
eyelets, fingers stuttering through muffled lace,  
skittering from the keyboard in disgrace.

Whimpered accompaniment to a tongued nipple.  
Cascade-glimmer of a chromatic scale.  
Tiny bone clack against porcelain, roast squab

or dove dripping from china plates; a sweating pail  
of ice, kicked over by a horse. *Ach*, to be robbed  
in one's sleep, robbed between a sip and a laugh!

(Because we're wading through wreckage, we're  
not even listening to all the crash and clatter—  
chords wrenched from their moorings, smashed  
etudes, arpeggios glistening as they heave and sink.)

Ciphers, the lot of them. Their money, their perfumed stink.