

## Visits to St Elizabeths

This is the house of Bedlam.

This is the man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is the time  
of the tragic man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is a wristwatch  
telling the time  
of the talkative man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is a sailor  
wearing the watch  
that tells the time  
of the honored man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is the roadstead all of board  
reached by the sailor  
wearing the watch  
that tells the time  
of the old, brave man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

These are the years and the walls of the ward,  
the winds and clouds of the sea of board  
sailed by the sailor  
wearing the watch  
that tells the time  
of the cranky man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is a Jew in a newspaper hat  
that dances weeping down the ward  
over the creaking sea of board  
beyond the sailor  
winding his watch  
that tells the time  
of the cruel man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is a world of books gone flat.  
This is a Jew in a newspaper hat  
that dances weeping down the ward  
over the creaking sea of board  
of the batty sailor  
that winds his watch  
that tells the time  
of the busy man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is a boy that pats the floor  
to see if the world is there, is flat,  
for the widowed Jew in the newspaper hat  
that dances weeping down the ward  
waltzing the length of a weaving board  
by the silent sailor  
that hears his watch  
that ticks the time  
of the tedious man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

These are the years and the walls and the door  
that shut on a boy that pats the floor  
to feel if the world is there and flat.  
This is a Jew in a newspaper hat  
that dances joyfully down the ward  
into the parting seas of board  
past the staring sailor  
that shakes his watch  
that tells the time  
of the poet, the man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is the soldier home from the war.  
These are the years and the walls and the door  
that shut on a boy that pats the floor  
to see if the world is round or flat.  
This is a Jew in a newspaper hat  
that dances carefully down the ward,  
walking the plank of a coffin board  
with the crazy sailor  
that shows his watch  
that tells the time  
of the wretched man  
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

**Elizabeth Bishop**

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