**BURLAP SACK**

 by Jane Hirshfield

A person is full of sorrow

the way a burlap sack is full of stones or sand.

We say, ‘Hand me the sack,’

but we get the weight.

Heavier if left out in the rain.

To think that the sand or stones are the self is an error.

To think that grief is the self is an error.

Self carries grief as a pack mule carries the side bags,

being careful between the trees to leave extra room.

The mule is not the load of ropes and nails and axes.

The self is not the miner nor builder nor driver.

What would it be to take the bride

and leave behind the heavy dowry?

To let the thin-ribbed mule browse the tall grasses,

its long ears waggling like the tails of two happy dogs?

From *After*, Bloodaxe (2006)