

Poetry Porch: Poetry

The Scribe

By Nels Hanson

For that writing later called cuneiform,
I jabbed the sharp wedge-ended stick
into the moist tablet to get it right,
but when I made a poem, I smeared
each scratch with wetter clay and
smoothed the dents with my finger, another,
another, starting again, until the slab
grew heavy with labor. In a hidden
sunburnt place, I leaned the form until
it baked hard as stone. I wrapped it in a cloth,
warning that, once you'd read it, to break it,
a shattered plate, and sweep one hundred amber
shards like breadcrumbs into the street
as you would offer fallen portions to birds.