

There were documents, decals, and
Junk mail in the stew. Too much sleep
Meant dreams piling up on the doormat of
Morning. Wiped feet, apologies, might become
A meal I am preparing for you, who are
Perhaps you, perhaps, after waking,

Someone else. The key to waking
Is to apply the spatula and
Gently sift the edible parts, which are
Still edible. How much sleep
Does a man need? asked Tolstoy, who'd become
Much preoccupied by the question of

Sleep versus waking, in other words of
Art versus reality – but which stood for waking
And which perhaps delayed it would become
A question later writers, such as Kafka and
Walter Benjamin, would ponder, often while sleep
Itself proved elusive to the authors. Who are

The dream police? asked someone else. Are
Milk snakes and corn snakes harbingers of
Some dread reptilian breakfast? Or is sleep
The asp that “sucks the nurse asleep”, waking
To riot unpoliced? Before knowledge and
Its fruits had been tasted and become

Like the breakfast of death, or Adam's rib become
Eve, the dreams which to us today are
Like a distorted image of daytime and
Call for interpretation or unmasking of
Their hidden pleasures were what, waking,
Lonely Adam knew already. This thing sleep

Was an echo, a repetition. Good thing sleep
Became a recipe we could misread, and so become
Recipes ourselves, and thus free, waking
To spilt milk and broken eggs, which are
Almost but not quite allegorical images of
Procreation, or procrastination. And,

Reaching for a mop, “the grey penumbra of dream persists and,
... in the solitude of the first waking hour, consolidates itself.” Become
A dream, the cornflakes remain uneaten, are words spoken in sleep.

— Patrick Price