

## **“Now They’re Saying Isolation Atrophies the Brain” by Maggie Smith**

Talking to yourself in an empty room  
sometimes feels like prayer but isn’t.

It isn’t prayer if you’re not asking  
for anything, and what would you ask for?

Any request more specific than *save me*  
would be so granular as to be worthless.

It can’t be prayer if you’re standing  
at your kitchen counter, wearing an apron

and a far-off look. It can’t be prayer  
if you’re walking in your neighborhood,

muttering to yourself, while Orion  
keeps buckling and unbuckling his belt

over the houses. It can’t be prayer if you have  
the expectation of privacy. If you think

no one’s listening. As a child I believed  
so fiercely in the power of my own mind,

when I thought *apple*, I half-expected  
a real one, large and red, to appear

in my hand. Now I know better. I talk  
to myself. Sometimes I even answer.