



ARE YOU
A
DEMOCRACY

boycott



WAR

The Windows

Paul Hoover

Argotist Ebooks

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The Windows

The Windows (Speech-lit Islands)

as if for the first time
you recognize the grass
its greenness uncanny

in trying to be green
as if for the first time
you open a letter

that had fallen
through the door
its message unique to you

had you been
as perhaps you seemed
the neighbor

the one whose name was yours
who finally joined the army
had you in fact a country

a life to give
wife and family
as if for a while

you could read the signs
remembered to unlearn
how the wind feels exactly

going up your spine
sensed the wheat sinking
into the ground nearby

the whiteness of milk
 its mystical skirt uplifted
 miss meat and miss gravy

as if the language
 was smudged with words
 speech-lit islands

that don't submerge in meaning
 as if light itself
 was never in doubt

on the question
 of transcendence
 bees sing bells ring

in the ear's black window
 you whisper to the glass
 its past in sand

step back please
 a sentence is passing
 someone's calling

someone's raining
 door's creaking contradictions
 what bride is not disheveled

by all the world's scissors
 make-shape shiftings
 been a long time

since you wrote yourself in stone
auto-lithographic
[I] seems to be alone

[I] suffers in a crowd
but not a yellow room
in not a yellow town

everyone's on loan
but someone here knows
why nimble people cry

a bullet makes you die
and then there's you
absent sometimes laughing

as if at last
there is no non-journey
across the whole word

what are you thinking
conjured of a god
pears you'll never taste

lines not written
what you know you are
you'll never be again

The Windows (Senses Are Planets)

I

You're the sole remaining actor
at the end of your story,

which only you can tell,
which only they can feel.

II

You didn't create
the story's beginning—

it belongs to someone else
and the main character says:

III

*It's lonely in this room—
no news comes to me.*

But something's running in
and in once more.

IV

The artifacts are empty,
thought the size of its thinking.
Crumbling up from nothing,
the earth and all its dust.

V

The day seems unending,
a hair in the soup egregious.

Inkling of an angel,
gorilla in the room.

VI

Last night on the ceiling,
the lights at high beam,

some of us slipped under
the lives we had to live.

VII

The pathos of distance
is what the eye bestows,

arriving as if returning,
revealed by what's disguised.

VIII

It's easy to confuse
a story and the world—

clarity is the madman,
mote in a bride's eye.

IX

Some are not angels,
some are not men.

Some have the power of speech,
one wing caught in a door.

X

Can you point to anything shapeless?
The hissing angel suspicious.

Everything spreads toward its limit.
The blue within the milk.

XI

A shocked, retreating figure,
blown into the future,

gazing back at the past,
each circumstance a feather.

XII

Where the train doesn't stop
the world is excessive.

Late angel at the station,
holding a valise.

XIII

The story that continues
through legend and the instant,

each next an obligation,
miming its O's and E's.

XIV

Nature, that comedian,
with nothing left to say.

Then there's the one
whose referent is missing.

XV

Bespeak me, if you will.
Create me with a name.

The naked vowels crying,
who is hearing here?

XVI

For instance,
the pleasure of naming

this one *amnesia*
and that one *cowl*.

XVII

Thing word, man gourd
from sound to deep sound.

Last dance perhaps
for nightmares and fictions.

XVIII

Yearning finds its wall,
intention is deep in its well.

Death is red willow.
Fallow angel: field.

XIX

Monstrous music, human garden,
where no two things are different.

Wrinkle in the glass
where a story might have passed.

XX

The story in the room,
pouring a glass of milk.

The story heavily weaving,
on no particular road.

XXI

Lovely to lie on the car
under a single star,

something left of life,
world me well and oh . . .

XXII

The television is soft
from being on all day,

quoting again the essential,
well over the edge.

XXIII

Senses are planets.
But the new euphoria weeps.

Only grace finds—
everything's in the planning.

XXIV

Nothing's nonsense yet;
she makes of love assent.

The shape of the beloved,
whose body she is of.

XXV

Lucidity of the fragment,
its lamp presently lit.

“Nor had I fallen leaping.”
“One wary of a wrinkle.”

XXVI

The more incomplete,
the closer it is to fate,

but only in language
and deeper than real.

XXVII

All the light they need
until their senses darken.

The furtive angel worries.
Where is the story now?

XXVIII

Taking a nap, it seems—
too much darkness at noon

and sweetness in the berry.
Even its bones are gray.

XXIX

See, the story is bleeding,
bleeding into our names.

Our meaning is running over.
Now it has gone too far.

XXX

Something within the window
gestures earnestly—

*Be careful with that myth,
it has to outlive us.*

The Windows (A War in Tawara)

Add "A,"
A nut for a jar of tuna,
A Santa at NASA.

Borrow or rob,
Boston did not sob.
But sad Eva saved a stub.

Cigar? Toss it in a can. It is so tragic.

Don did nod,
"Dogma, I am God;
Devil never even lived."

Evil Olive,
Ed is on no side.
Ed is a trader, cast sacred art aside.

Flesh saw Mom wash self.
Flee to me, remote elf!

God lived as an evil dog.
Go, do, dog!

Harass Sarah!

I prefer pi.
I, a man, am regal; a German am I.
If I had a hi-fi . . .

Jar a toga, rag not a raj.

Jar bar crab, raj.

Kayak salad, Alaska yak.

Key lime, Emily—ek!

Late, fetal,

Leon sees Noel.

Live, devil,

Laid on no dial.

Ma is a nun, as I am,

Mirror rim

Murder for a jar of red rum;

Must sell at tallest sum.

No lemons, no melon,

Never even

Noon.

No sign, in evening, is on.

No slang is a signal, son.

Nurses run—

Oozy rat in a sanitary zoo.

Oh, who was it I saw? Oh, who?

Poor Dan is in a droop.

Pull up if I pull up.

“Q,” said Dias, “Q.”

Rise to live, sir.

Rats live on no evil star.

Stack cats,

Solo gigolos.
Swap paws,
Step on no pets.
Sexes, exes,

Too hot to hoot,
Tug at a gut.
Tell a ballet
Tulsa night life: filth, gin, a slut.

U.F.O., tofu,
Vanna, wanna V?

Wow!
Was it a bar or a bat I saw?
Won't lovers revolt now?
We panic in a pew.

Xerox orex,
Yawn a more Roman way!
You bat one in, resign in evening. Is Ernie not a buoy?

Zeus was deified, saw Suez.
ZZZZ, Otto, *ZZZZ*.

The Windows (The XYZs of Reason)

A

American boys can distribute equidistant forks,
grant hieratic inflow, jack Klansmen, labor
many noons. Oases parody queasiness
rarely; smitten teenagers understand vacuous waiters,
xenophobic Yankees, zealots.

B

Art, beckoning, climbs daring eyes, frequents
gangways, hurts intensely. Jaded, kind, limousine liberals
may negotiate obligations. Politicians, quitters,
relish shadow thistles. Unrepentantly, vermin worry
x-marks; yaw, zeroable.

C

Ablaze, battered, Caracas, denuded, emphasizes fairness,
ghosts holy imbroglios Jackson kept—lawgiver,
matchmaker, ninny, outgunning pellucid Quakers.
Rational sanctuaries turn unearthly, vanish, writhe,
xerox, yes, zero.

D

Agitated bears consume delirious echoes; fatten
gadgets. Hallelujahs imagine jalousied kitchens, low-flying liars,
make mincemeat nightbirds outlast porcine quiddity.
Rise, shave, Timothy, unfasten volition's workpants,
x-ray Yahweh's zombie.

E

Avaricious butlers commit duller evasions, foment
grander hijackings, incite jackasses, killers laughing

mightily nightly. Oenophiles, plowmen, query
reified stone tigers. Utilitarian visionaries wake, waver,
x-out, yammer, zoom.

F

Atone, bluster, creep, dear devotee. Emptiness forms
gently here in Jakarta: keyholes, loopholes,
manholes notwithstanding. Offer, please, quiescent
riots; signs thickest utter verbs white with
xenolithic yarrow, zounds!

G

Anonymous, bitter, Charlie decides equanimity foregoes
gaiety; hies instantly, jerkily kills. Let
monsters, nobly ochre, prepare quiet
rounds, sweeten tea unless vertigo whirls,
xylophone yes-men zealous.

H

Arched balustrades cover dovetails evenly; fluvial
gravels harry into jocularly, kinema limners,
marshland nesters, oriole periphrastics, quickness
roundabout sunlight. The ugliest verbiage wins.
X-men? Yesterday's zeitgeist.

I

Abracadabratc batsmen count doubtful every finger.
Gravity's hobgoblin instantiates jactation, kedges left,
moves night, offends probity's querulous
radioman. Seamus seeks tongue's undercoat; verdigris whales,
xeric, yomp zoetic.

J

Abecedarian brainiacs call dairymen edgy, flocculate
gallantly, having inked jazzetry's kazoo locutions.
Marvelous nightshade's openly perilous quarantine readies
sadness. Tipping up, vertical, wandering
xebecs yowl, zaftig.

K

Alone, bathysmal, certainty doubts each feeling,
gives heart its jasmine kiss, loves
madness, narcissism. Often people quit
reading sad tales until vanguard wastrels,
xenial, yikker zazzily.

L

Add bathos, children, dread ebbtides' faraway
gyres. Hold intermittent jitterbugs, keelhaul landsmen;
martyrdom's niceties only pacify quadragenarians.
Rare salvos tremble, upend villages, whereupon
xysters yellow zestily.

M

Art's beauty chills death. Evidence: erotic *fotografías*,
gentler hierarchies, inside jokes, kidskin lovemaking.
Marianne, necessary, open-hearted, paradise quickens
restlessly; sleep tight upon vagabond waves,
xylomancy, year-round zarzuela.

N

Another brown cat digs evening's flickering
grainfield. Hail, idols, jargonauts, kinfolk, ladders
moonlit necessitate other provocations—qasidas, quamoclit, quale.
Relentlessly sing, tired understudy; variorums, wall-to-wall,
xanthous, yarl zestlessly.

O

Apt, blameless, contrarian, deep, even, fetching,
garrulous, hieratic, inept, jacent, Kafkaesque, limber
Maggie notices onerous prophets quarreling,
runs straightaway to unhappy, vague, wishy-washy
Xanthippe, yesteryear's Zephyr.

P

A boy can dare ebb, fold
gray hands in jail, keep lax
Mike's nights of pelf, quake
real slow, turn up verve's worth,
Xu's young zatch.

Q

Act, be, create, determine. Earth-shaking folly
gauges holy intensity's jargons. Karmic litigation
might not oblige Paris; quicksilver
razzle-dazzle slinks toward universal vacuousness, wholly
xenomorphic; yields zabaglione.

R

All babysitters, capacious, droll, eat fatigue,
glare. Hackneyed icons jostle knockwurst, lacerate
Machiavellian nannies. Oblivious parents question
reactionary sinners' taboos. Ugly vulvas wince, while
x-rated ying-yangs zigzag.

S

Acrostics, ballads, centos, dialogues, epitaphs, fabliaux;
georgics, huitains, iambs, jingles, kyrielles, lyrics;
monodies, nightsongs, odes, panegyrics, quartets;

rengas, sestinas, triolets, ubi sunts, villanelles, wakas;
Xanaduisms, yüeh-fu, zewhyexary.

T

Active batboys climb difficult, ephemeral fences,
guard heartrending immensities inundating Jamaica, Kingston; ludicrous
machinations, never officially permitted, quiver,
resent states toppling. Unharnessed, violent, warmongering
xenophobia yardarms Zach.

U

After bread, calypso, daddy-long-legs eats fatted
goats herded into jetports, keeps ladybugs,
moonlight, neat. Obscure powers, quirky,
restless, suppose thunder's underworld visitation whole;
xylocarp yaffingales zizz.

V

As belle-lettres counterpoint determines every fad,
garish halos immortalize Jersey's kabalistic lyricists;
mainlining nostrums outrage personal quacksalvers.
Rhetorical signage terrifies, uncle; versify when waggery,
xenomancy, yean Zeno.

W

At belly's center, desire enters, foraging
ground happily intuitive, jazzed. Kingdoms labeled
"male, non-combatant," offend peace-officers. Quail
render shadow timeless, undergrowth verdant, whereas
xiphopagus yelp, "Zenzizenzizencic!"

X

Able-bodied bodybuilders can't do everything! Finnish
giants, heroic interrogators into Japanophilia, keep legendary

mines nice. Oration: “Party-hearty, qualifiers,
reality’s self-medicating tragedians, unkempt, verify womanhood’s
xiphoid yoni zoster.”

Y

Ardent but belligerent, Candy Darling elicited factoids
grandly, helped inquiring journeyman’s keyhole leaping.
Marital nightlights obey periodicity. Quotidian
reckonings, sycophantic triumphalism, underscore vacation wastelands
Xerxes’ yeti zapped.

Z

Ava bore charity dutifully. Eventually, foolish
girls, humdingers, inserted Jello keys locks
maintained nicely. Officials, pretty, quarrelsome,
resisted supporting terror. Underwater vigilantes wore wakerobin;
xenops, yapok, zipped.

The Windows (Adios Montevideo)

- When we are no longer dead, we begin to be alive.
- We never forgive those who make us blush.
- The greater the wisdom, the older the fool.
- Time will show you French fries in a handful of dust.
- Prosperity delights in sudden reverses.
- The family is one of nature's enduring errors.
- Where fear is, only the fearful succeed.
- Anger blows out the lamp of the spine.
- Ambition and folly also went to school.
- If you wait 'til the weather is right, you will never wash your car.
- For the friendship of two, the patience of one is required.
- Because liberty is precious, it must be rationed.
- Mistakes are our teachers—they help us to unfurl.
- The company loves misery.
- We are the government, Big Oil and I.
- Hasten slowly and you will never arrive.
- The most impotent law is always the most forceful.
- Every day is lost in which you dance once.
- The civilized savage makes the best civilian.
- No one can write the life of a man but those who have beaten him.
- Advice is like a snowplow—the more insistent, the taller the snow.
- A personal library implies a degree of ignorance.
- Never be so obscure as to become a reviewer.
- Half a lie is not the same as half the truth.
- More than those who seek happiness miss it, those who have it disregard it.
- A man convinced against his will had better take a yellow pill.
- The greatest obstacle to summer is to linger in winter.
- When you blame others, you give up your power to rage.
- We are what we delete.
- Impeccable manners is the chief source of caustic remarks.
- Comedy and tragedy are identical cousins.

- If you are nice to people, they will eventually seek revenge.
- An enemy's fire is the first to burn.
- Unhappiness is part of a healthy emotional profile.
- You're only as happy as your saddest child.
- Rhyme is the sign of an uneven mind.
- One may live in a palace of shame, or one may live in a funeral home.
- The cleverest liars tell the truth.
- Bullies are never reborn; they're simply emulated.
- In matters of the heart, there are no economy cars.
- To the old, the old is news.

The Windows (Fifty Sentences from a Fiction)

1. Jennifer knew more about ballroom dancing than she knew about herself.
2. In any gathering, Roland was the one closest to the brink.
3. Because farming never began in the region, it never came to a stop.
4. The cries of Arctic terns were faintly heard, within or beneath the wind.
5. One hundred years of hills, wind-beaten trees, and secondary sheep.
6. Those of us with memories had difficulty with the present.
7. Accidents never happened, but the concept was enthralling, especially to Jem.
8. The road to Lindisfarne was apparent at low tide and covered with kelp, which meant a bumpy ride across the North Sea floor.
9. A branch of the tree had slipped through the window and, as she slept, scraped the whitewashed ceiling.
10. *Populus Tremuloides* was merely the name of the species.
11. God was an infinite series of primitive or putative forms, he concluded during his final landing.
12. His last utterance was his greatest but sadly too long to fit on the tombstone.
13. Error was the least difficult of masters, at least for Ellen.
14. Kafka's fictive context was the state we were actually in.
15. The great voice talent is always the first to challenge his host's assertions.
16. The problem with Jack's past was his need to live in the future.
17. She noticed, with a shock, the sudden appearance of a new Ivory baby.
18. Marianne had always preferred the translucent to the transparent and opaque.
19. Mothers smile at their children and at an empty room.
20. His license plate said, ALAS ERECT, in capital letters.
21. The Matthew Barney exhibit made her feel soiled, as if by the antiseptic urine of a male cheerleader.

22. In social defeat, Robin always wore the brave costumes of narcissism and fate.
23. Numb Nuts was the name of the driver, not the passenger in back; nevertheless she was offended.
24. Arnold patiently descended into the warm bunny-hutch of a Henry James sentence.
25. They cherished the thought but hated the motive.
26. All day, the scent of a certain waffle.
27. On the swerving way home from his retirement party, two thoughts obsessed him: the song “Santa Baby” and the sentence, “It is beautiful to die and also to destroy.”
28. Tim’s emotional style was so contrived it had come to seem natural, though only to him.
29. Williams preferred art that conjoined his childhood memories with those of the state.
30. “Where is the infinite object?” the good professor shrieked, “the lapidary bride?”
31. She noted from the top of the stair the pathetic part in his hair, as clean and even as a child’s.
32. Opera was that part of Sarah that was not yet dead.
33. Allen’s tendency toward digression related directly to his lack of love.
34. The novelist had now reached the very loins of the story.
35. It was the kind of shaggy, sunlit afternoon when everything seemed a rough draft of itself.
36. “When you reach my age,” Donald whispered to Ann, “You’ll feel deprived of a time to live in.”
37. “My mind is like a bike some illiterate kid is riding,” Justin said too loudly.
38. The book remained unread for the rest of their lives.
39. “History isn’t dead,” Marjorie exclaimed, “It’s sleeping in the heads of Baby Boomers.”
40. The folding and unfolding of the Los Angeles map had become his chief interest.
41. Beginning at his bedroom window, a river of black ants stretched for four hundred miles.

42. Harkins' sojourn in the dumbwaiter had reached a befitting conclusion.
43. "Would you rather not live in Pittsburgh or in Hamburg?" Quentin inquired of the group.
44. She was now approaching the outer limits of the eponymous Camp Jessica.
45. All evening Hopkins was haunted by Garcia's assertion that "consciousness is structured not unlike Latin dance."
46. "Was life, after all, only a small rift in eternity?" Betsy wondered as she climbed the stairs to John's bed.
47. Irony was no longer the issue with Stevens; it was something closer to candor.
48. Damn the talk of politesse; John Baxter had a life to save.
49. She was always forced to grope in the dark for something she knew was long missing.
50. For instance, did you ever see anyone put gloves in a glove compartment?

The Windows (ephemeral ladder)

where
do
words
reach,
above
and
below,
repeating
their
feast
for
the
gift
of
thin
air,
where-
upon
they
speak
their
blue-
black
names,
be-
stirred
by
gusts
of
meaning,
the

idiom's
private
music
being
just
enough,
the
body
left
ripe,
be-
gotten
of
no
one,
columns
of
thought
breaking
and
turning,
the
hazard
of
risking
what's
already
gone
(pointillist
meat
on
pointillist
bread),
because

the
poem
says,
forget
that
we
met,
you're
nothing
to
me
now,
the
ice
in
no
dice,
owl
in
bowl,
the
wolf's
only
truth:
we
must
obey
the
tooth,
when-
ever
it
rains
on

sacred
serpent
mounds,
a
foot
goes
out
of
bounds,
collecting
all
the
meaning
that
never
reaches
words,
we
suffer
contemplation,
admire
the
least
erection,
finally
there's
the
town
of
childhood
comprehension,
spun
from
sugar,

crackling
in
the
pan,
the
one
with
cajones
dreams
for
no
man,
each
slowly
lived
moment
emerging
from
its
rind,
landes-
werker
landes-
mann,
where
is
the
land,
where
do
we
stand
to
watch

the
waiter
wait,
snow
hesitate
in
dropping
to
the
ground
(after
the
embrace
the
turning
away),
before
the
last
letter,
what
the
post-
man
has
to
say,
in
a
voice
like
evening,
infinity
is

a
sea,
its
sun
gone
home,
but
the
poem's
solar
system
consists
of
sonic
holes,
abysses,
pesos,
kisses
what
anchors
can
meander,
cerebral
and
coyotl,
running
with
our
accents
through
the
known
world,
the

most
sonorous
word
being
simpatía
in
its
silken
under-
clothes,
for
what
they
call
suspense
is
not
parenthesis
(a
Beckett
play's
propelled
by
its
dead
ends),
for-
ever
to
remain
the
comma
in
the

sentence,
its
broad
landscapes
and
inverse
vistas,
you
must
begin
in
fire
and
work
toward
coal,
whelped
pup
and
kittens
racing
toward
the
storm,
the
rain-
gray
faces
staring
from
our
doors,
paper
suns

burning
in
a
paper
sky,
the
brightness
of
the
lapis,
our
grammars
and
our
chairs,
don't
run
toward
the
light
with
verbs
in
your
veins,
caballero
go
solo,
no
reason
not
to
craze,
can't

quite
remember
whom
to
turn
to,
where
the
money's
buried,
and
why
milk
burns,
mother's
touch
is
brilliant,
and
genius
is
a
blur
(for
maría
baranda,
to
honor
raúl
renán),
there's
one
thin
ladder

for
all
the
words
to
climb,
soon
all
the
room
a
body
ever
needs,
for
god's
sake,
she
said,
don't
say
the
names
of
things
we
all
fall
from.

The Windows (We've decided) Homophonic Series

1

I can be myself today, tall space ape
in a garden where other space apes play.
What a nice time this will be! and I
can roll on the sides of my balled feet
like a hairy barrel loaded, swinging arms
that scratch the ground like leaves. I'm
an ape today, headed for my pulpit of joy
in sunshine by the window. Daughter laughs.

That's good. We can hear her mother dressing:
conspicuous absent rustle, dry nylon and hair.
Oh, lord of the spinal cord, what stone
repose do I feel when high heels spike
the spilled roast beef? I do not play
no rock and roll. I am an ape today.

2

Spies can be themselves and pray, space shapes
like wardens where other space shapes pray.
What bright signs lists can be! and I
can play goalie on gliding robo-feet
like an aery feral gnosis, thinking of alms
that match the sound of waves. I'm
a shape that prays, shedding all culpable joys
in an undying window. Laughter laughs.

That's new. We can fear its other lessons:
continuous absent hustle, tight nylons and tears.
Ode bored with final form, what bone
composure do I feel when ideals strike

the still moist leaf? I do not spray
no phlox with oil. I am a shape today.

3

I can see the shelf OK, call space a grape
in jargon since tender fresh grapes change.
What a crime scene this will be! and I
can roll on my bowling ball feet
like a scary bear exploded, singing of charms
that catch the sound of the sea. I'm
a grape, OK, headed for my gulp of joy
in an unshining window. Laughter gasps.

What's food? We can bear our brother *fressing*:
despicable absent bustle, cry of lions and bears.
Oh, lord of the penal code, what stoned
exposure do I feel when the spine feels like
chilled ice tea? Nor do I ever say
no lox and bagels. I am a grape, OK?

4

The eye can be itself today, space tape
in a garden where other space tapes play.
What a fine slime this will be! An eye
call roll on the side of its raw seeing
like a tarrying arrow slowing, singing words
that flinch like *ounce* and *please*. The eye is
itself today, shedding all its Tupelo joy
in gun-shine at the window. Daughter's black

in mood. She can fear the other mission:
continuous ashen tussle of high pylons and air.
Restored like the final chord, what tonal
closure do I feel when spiked tea kills

a thrilled ghost cleanly? The eye won't pay
the landscape's toll. The eye is space today.

5

The shy can be themselves today—pace and gape
in a dungeon where others gape and pace.

What a fine shyness this will be! and shyness
can stroll the length of its long street
like a hairy chairman bloated, singing harms
that smash the proud like fleas. The shy
have faith today, headed for their populist joy
in the blind sign of a window. Father laughs,

“That's good.” He can hear his mother's lessons:
ubiquitous passion, dust, fine dye jobs, and prayer.

Torn like the final word, what prone
disposal do I seek when high steel strikes
a West Coast priest? The shy don't play
with no damned fool. The shy are afraid today.

The Windows (Homosyntactic Series)

The Air in Paris

It is walking on my green fields
and its snow is at my window.
It makes the sun set in my thick world;
it runs the sideshows in my thin dream.
In my mind, it runs on empty
Like a sailboat in the wind.

It revives the hours that are always expiring;
it has no time for me.
Its fistfights in black hallways
Drain moonlight from my swamplands,
Make me sigh, fly, and break,
Sleep, having slept on the way.

The Pardon

Like a net of golden fish captured in a pool,
sunlight yellows the grass in a yard of the Summer Palace;
I lie down upon it,
 a kind of emotional tourist.

And everywhere there is a table
of elderly, grumpy, eternal children of chess players;
they shall enter the cafeteria.

In light there remains some darkness.
The sun is immortal and psychotic;
it wants someone to stare at it,
and I am certain that I
 will make that blinding error.

in a bedroom or yellow kitchen

in my bedroom or yellow kitchen
unhinged by the anxious evening
when only I am awake
and the plumbers are plumbing their wives
with offers of milk in the kitchen,
I sing by ceiling light
not for amusement or money
or the anger and shame of the crowd
setting themselves on fire
but for no purpose at all
except I thought I should.

not for the relentless waitress, nor
the bartender's fury, I sing
moderato on a private, sea-drift stage
not for the flowers beheaded
by lawnmowers and children
but for the sheer pleasure, my tongue
around each word and high note
that grants me little fame or courage
but because I knew I could.

because laughter is last

because laughter is last

I hesitate to mention

the parallax of glass

will never quite disguise you

simply to follow the rule

when trees are at the window

your kisses are proof

and proof's a nobler state

than wisdom

sheriff, I swear by all badges, don't try —

the worst mess of your day is more than

spilled silk that covers

our lives and those of others; therefore, we'll

gladly die, dreaming of alarms

for lies are always ellipses

and life is perhaps no author

The Dog was Pleasant, and the Cat was Firm

The dog was pleasant, and the cat was firm.

The spider became the web; and the violin concerto

was like the dog's dream of chasing a cat.

The dog was pleasant, and the cat was firm.

Their worlds were broken, as if they had no words;
nevertheless, an irresistible ladder rose upon the stage,

preferred to lean, had to lean, to be truly a ladder.

The man to whom the dog was true, for whom

the factory glass was shattered, knows
glass shatters only when it must.

The dog was pleasant; it was perfectly so.

The cat was firm; it had no laughter.

The cat was half of the story, a part of every conjecture:
the relation of dogs and cats, themselves

fiction, as fall is spring and summer's summer; whereas,
a young man is winter, leaning and laughing here.

Why is Why?

Where was our happiness,
when was our time? None were
clothed, all were blamed. And what
is blameless: the angry childhood,
the passive father —
an elephant stumbling, crying sharply? The
strength of such surrender, even in memory,
restores love
and in that victory, tips
the soul over. Fathers
fly low, beneath cloud cover; they
accept their losses,
and in their disappointment soar
on thick wings, as
waves within the sea, hoping to live
forever and dying by the minute,
in their excesses
meeting with the taxman.

So the father who threatens
relents. The solitary singer,
stingy in old age, opens
his house to friends. Though he is tipsy,
his hearty bellowing
declares: love is ungainly.
This is our violence;
this is car repair.

Blue Sand

Sand, blue sand,
drifting and without feature
blue sand forever
consisting of shadow.

More imagined
than a black wave
erected on the beach —
it is covered with lanterns

made of coral and bone.
It is the way of the sun;
It has been imagined
by the first man
who slept in this place.

Seems like the sandman
is moving on again,
shifting along with two faces,
one folded upon another.

Libretto

Insistently, in the evening, a book is singing to you,
Pushing you gently along the cliff-edge of sleep, until clouds brighten
A tablet abandoned near the foundry, near a river of molten steel,
And creating the gray sculptural shapes of a father who punishes when he blesses.

In admiration of itself, the restless aptitude of mirrors
Carries you within, where the image of mother cries to no one
In the heartless parlors of West Virginia, with thunderstorms passing
And guns in the narrow hallway, the glistening rain her master.
Perhaps now it's acceptable for the husband to crash over fields
In his fat black car, allegro. The clamor
Of hysterical men is within us, their motors run
Too loudly in the vestibule of sleep, they drive like children into the future.

Below, Below

The dog that walked (a belling hound)
To bewitch the night with galling sound
Is citizen now of the underground,

A movie star on the darkest stage,
One for whom no age remains,
No thought of advantage nor of gain.

Pre-existence has delayed your fate;
Eternity also lies in state;
Resign your smile, it's quite too late.

Let the great green world go home;
If called, put the call on hold;
All that's warm will soon grow cold.

Your friends will seem entirely new,
Enemies blend into the view;
Behold the false, it's also true.

No more life of falling hard,
All distance near, love too far.
The worst wound is now a scar.

The highest prize has fallen low;
When the answer's yes, it's also no;
Where's love now? Below, below.

The Room

She assented so quickly
to undress you, you hoped
the person you seemed to be

would hold her, and be
loved, and turn to the wall,
blow out, as she requested,

the candle, to darken
all shapes in the room
and those within the window,

her darkness, eyes,
the light she felt then
blindly, it was something

gathered deeply, in you, as
simply your being and hers,
and a wellspring so insistent,

yet of the world apprehensive, when,
while she slept, the wall
paintings approached too near

and spread then
within you, as she
darkened, faded, and

your true life was
benighted, enormous, rare,
bathed in time, and ending

or not ending, when, at that
time, you lost her, being
your right, and that was awful.

She undressed to sleep, reversed
your life, spared
nothing, it is now forever

all. She knows
it is gone, but you
insisted as you wept

and departed, no longer empty,
that here by your remaining
when all's attained,

a darkness comes
of the night rising
and final evenings
in the room.

Praying for the Archbishop

I

This is my entreaty and my last word. The old
lacking in any charm, cars in the carport,
—such feverish violins—beyond established archives,
a silken paradise, overstuffed panorama.
Guns, knives, and fists, prepare a brief eternity,
however it's sliced, diced, or remembered.
Begotten by a world of forms, one regrets
the lasting effects of a brief memorandum.

II

A refined woman may sing the filthiest songs,
her ragged lips, ripped young men, despite
the Puritans who wear silk stockings to bed, who lately sleep
within the dream of every well-tucked sheet,
for never is there cleanliness
without its rampant shadow,
and thereupon I pitch my tent and bravely sing
in the parking lot of a burning church.

III

Lost hopes ashen at every Sunday barbeque,
as in the cold breath of a mouse,
turn back from that nest, curl upon my chest,
and become the dancer of my distress;
eat the heart out of my breast; ripe with the crime
and planted in infertile soil,
it surmises all that isn't; prepares the world-mess
for everything that cannot be, infinitely.

IV

Yet within that city, we can always shake
a youthful shape from all our aging mirrors,
being of such curve as modern music makes
of peaceful hours and careless afternoons;
We can still regret the songs we've sung,
that put our sleeping friends in a state of frenzy,
those lovers, outlaws, and backstabbers,
who are lost, or losing, or refused the invitation.

The Windows (Shutters Shut and Open)

I

when a thinking

 springs eternal

never quite out of style

 who are we to say

the world is not

 a sentence

of what remains

 of sappho

is this too steady

 too ready for appeal

where are all the words

 time didn't take away

II

if it shatters it is real

no hesitation here

we're winding up a world

lightning at the templum

an unlived experience

stands with back turned

wherever lights are on

cinematic people

arrive at flood stage

events most recent

warrant not fondness

what color is intuition

green apple

forest yellow

III

intentional existence

will have to do for now

the order of things

in a blue room gone

speech is on the run

all is sentence now

the preposition knows

it's truer when less dull

to verify the sun

the infinite comes unstrung

how much for making love

without a mother tongue

IV

rain in the desert

never hits the ground

eroici furori

notes before we go

the new mess

at the oasis

becomes the new stasis

she ministered

to the kittens

canadian sand dune pictures

brian wanted

to change the world

but the world

changed brian

V

the work of ignorance

is never quite complete

dark writing has a dream

only grace finds

happiness in prison

after seven years

your angel is assembled

naked feathers graying

lake of light shaded

a single shadow

holds the mountain fast

whatever is outlives us

VI

something old happens

drags you by the bone

no trace of sensation

no crucible to contain it

the way smoke climbs

ladders it finds

peaches soft

from being lifted

sight is not seeing

one size fits all being

I would if I could

sing only for their pleasure

VII

its satchel packed

with yarrow

the rebel angel

under the table

is wary of a wrinkle

quiet all evening

its daughters drifting far

how the words age

never quite immortal

some metaphysical plaster

for sorrow

and the ceiling

VIII

a play for two computers

facing each other speaking

I'm fine how are you

couldn't be better

how's the wife and family

now the play is over

the curtain goes down

necessity is easy

its artifacts are empty

a digital midnight bell

IX

heard in error

“the candy man klan”

wore gnat suits in summer

and also the finnish

can't stop dancing

cheek to cheek

frowns on their faces

arctic stations, terns

your thick

and thwarted word

this I know

for certain

X

it's on and off again

the local towers falling

in that rigorously

formal way

cathy's in cathay

hope evening comes

an otherworldly butcher

chatting on his phone

seeking an expedition

then he is granted love

brain's blue water

muons

XI

repelled by imagination

that hoary concept

lyric plunder

we've adopted

a schedule

rigorous yet familiar

your devotion

is brilliant

"I speak

with my first lips"

more grounding

less resilience

XII

last dance perhaps

for nightmares and fictions

you have or you haven't

the ghost of a chance

monstrous music

human garden

the mind's on fire

its overture half over

one leaf of every tree

her bright sarcasm

an aspect of the past

that never quite happened

XIII

no two things quite the same

identical but different

sameness is a stranger

uncanny in the mirror

nor had we fallen leaping

across signification

by what are we sequestered

in the world's last room

what the giant dreams

cannot be said or sewn

the ego has landed

on a branch of pious song

The Windows (The Clearing)

“Abierto al balbuceo / un suave decir,” María Baranda

A greeting,
a lonely greeting,
an embrace too late to be final,
hanging in the air
of funnel cakes and catfish,
of a time transparent as water,
of sea foam and waterspout
that leaps and repeats,
separating time from its rooms,
and one time says to another
squeaking like a hinge,
that it burns and lives in burning,
that it comes too late and too early,
that it covers its sighs with signs
and those signs with their things
like a landscape lacking in words,
nameless hills and abandoned forests,
and a symphony played in circles,
without melody, without rhythm,
without a single note,
conceptual compositions,
comprehensible only in shade
or the deep liquid of mirrors,
the punctual lake and the late one,
the blue sleep of white parrots,
the wet dreams of rivers
that will only flow west,
and the worm that thinks *I've got you*
dies as it eats and dreams.

But flames eat into the house,
where they sleep on the beds and sofas,
there's a dog named Sloopy
and a monkey called The Professor,
and a choir enters swaying
in their rich green robes,
singing such green notes that
the moment is hot with its reasons,
as a century with its seasons,
which want to endure forever,
and in refusing to pass
become immortal and brutal,
like the clench, the sob, and the grieving,
the wrench, the inch, and the pinch
that sing the same note always,
but are also brilliant,
with fierce, unrepentant rhymes
fledged with the slightest difference:
your flower in my mirror,
my flower in your eyes,
rooted in vertigo
and ringing like a bell,
where, midway through the millennium,
the little dog seems to be reading
a book of world history
that ends on page 38,
and the rain that had been raining
passes into flood stage,
drowning our low-lying houses,
but only one book is threatened,
the book of life itself,
which an adolescent hand
holds safely above the tide;
men play cards on their roofs

as they did before the storm,
and the fly that used to sing solo
joins in a baritone chorus,
while everything that exists
comes more fully into being;
the rose decides it's a rose
and not a symbol of love;
the owl is more owl than ever
in the arms of its loving mouse,
hunger is finally starved,
and the Yugo and the Pinto
dance on a floodlit stage,
for the flowers given in love
receive those given in death,
and in the strictest confidence
lovers say to each other,
I can feel you all around me,
but never exceed their skins,
though they go on being flagrant
as they devour one another,
for their bodies are made of hours,
and the thoughts they have while reading
the last book ever written
are the finest ever spoken.

Call the creatures to their stations
and the random to their plan;
it's the time and the season
when the disbelieving god
becomes a true believer,
creating his own ring tone
from the sound of falling snow,
and the soloists and flautists
of Uruguay and Argentina

eat an immaculate soup
of pine cones and armored ants,
for this is the last repast,
soon to be consumed
at the last tavern of the final age,
and the same world turns
as we perceive to be turning,
fatter than a hatpin
but taller than the spirit,
and your mouth springs open
because the world's greatest kisser,
known only as Haroldo,
has set a new world record,
not south of the border
or west of the Pecos
but in the city of Fresno,
in the white shade of noonday,
with a woman named Mosca,
for what had been evil
turns out to have been civil
by the rules of that land,
where the regulations of song
are the same for archangels,
two parts sperm, one part cathedral,
and the cauterized petals of flowers
burn for our delight,
like the immortal campfires
of ordinary people,
who are, of course,
very much like ourselves,
vacuous and gargantuan,
stronger than stone
but weaker than water,
racing through their gardens

and plunging into the sun,
sleeping like the blue one
and dreaming like a sponge,
for the time of supplication
is the vigil of the caiman,
and the time of patty caking
rains fire ants from our eyes.

Dreams are supplications,
your daily thoughts are wishes,
and only moist worlds bear;
therefore, our final examinations
are done in the open air,
with the immaculate precision
of a sandstorm and a pear,
subtlest of agreements
of penumbra and umbrella,
the harmonizing rapids
and the handsome baritone voice
of a lake as it catches fire;
for the gentleman of blood
is sordid and fastidious,
and the lady of profusion
holds white things to her face,
quiet is the soapstone
and eloquent the grape,
extensive is the forest
and so minimal the page,
and still the wall stands,
meant for whispering into
or tapping code upon,
between us and the candle,
between the light and sun,
within the world advancing

and beyond the old one gone,
for the symphonies of your father
and dance halls of your mother
circulate beneath our feet,
rivers of liquid sombreros
that make a lasting impression
on the punctual and the dull,
because of a lonely greeting
and the sandpaper in our eyes,
abrading the world that bears
and the word that gives it birth,
because of a blonde weeping
and the brunette lying in wait,
where the sympathy of crows
is never to be trusted,
and the gentleness of owls
is vertiginous on the stairs;
because a lonely greeting
heard only by one child,
and the snow remaining to fall,
as it descends the stairs,
become distracted also;
the stillness of the question
meets the answers running in riot;
and the age of the xylophage
never fully arrives,
despite the warmth of the forests
and the cooling of our towers,
the lapwing striding the heights
and the brilliance of the knife..

Every being has size,
and every foraging fox
has a thousand humid schemes

and the perfect mouse in mind,
which cries as it thinks it must,
with amplitude and volume,
in carrot top and brick;
because there is no change
and change is all there was,
the principal of lumber
takes the vows of a sponge;
sequences of white vine
follow the path of wood
beyond the lightning field,
and the agony of the pianist
becomes an errant pleasure,
moral water and moral mud,
moral love and moral blood,
the sun lethargic, the light fine,
because the moonlight's thin
and signs do bind,
because we are wretched,
and the earth works overtime,
because our private gardens
are small in the way of nature
and the appetites of the public
are part of the fermentation,
because the snow's aloofness
settles among the fish traps,
below the reach of the infinite,
where the social has no reach.

For when the word is flesh,
we'll sleep in the shape of letters,
and our commas will be crows,
and we will dream of reading
in an armchair of ice in heaven,

where our tongues begin to carve
from the darkest mills of grammar
the thinnest shapes of syntax,
and all the perilous travelers
find safety in passing stations
of cloudbank, wheat field, and fire,
and the principle of gravitation
becomes the rule of song,
to mean rather than balance
our velocities and measures,
not because we are names
but because we root and stammer,
and the place we are going
is hidden within the map,
its geologies and ardors
restless and yet not shaken
in a cosmos Heraclitean,
where Parmenides takes a nap
in the fervent arms of Zeno;
halfway through what's halved,
you have it and yet you haven't,
you calve and yet you cleave,
and the heart takes all the blame,
its satisfactions at ease,
because an ounce of introspection
becomes the things we mean,
because everything we wanted—
clouds in the water, mind in the air,
and the carrion crow at repair—
are the ground note of stone,
so who are we to insist on a place
in the overall scheme of attention,
where words are lost and earned,
and angels retrieve the verbs

from *nunca*'s historical site
for the palaces of *jamás*?

God of the broken bread,
give us our daily dead,
let no man squander breath
who has not eaten death.

Help us to ridicule powers
larger than our own, and tempt
us not with dogs and cats
that weep with us, we imagine,
in the smallest rooms, in the tallest towers;
give us this day our hunger, thirst,
and fragrant evenings of furtive dining;
our errancies are in the planning,
and accidents "are the case";
that is, they always happen.

If waves crumble at the edge
of being, a hummingbird preys
on the photograph of a flower,
and the rest is silence, well-done,
medium, rare; if the joke, aside,
and quip are held in suspension
like the surface tension of water,
then perhaps we can safely say,
"The corn is green" and mean it,
for it's in the state of truth
that we tend to be most untrue,
tongues frozen to the metal pole
some sentence led us to,
your shadow's a perfect blue

on the mind's grassy meadow,
graining us into the day,
and the greatest force for change
turns out to have been measure.

Just a closer walk with the sea,
aimless, without direction,
a soul in search of its eraser
but almost at peace with pleasure,
for these gestures in language
have miles to go as they weep,
& their innocent eyes do peep,
thereby to be awakened;
Jake's the name of a cat,
and Djamilla is a figure
in the novel of jazz ideas,
Bedouin Hornbook,
by Nathaniel Mackey,
wherein she represents
the shifting voice of sand;
did you understand it
the first time you read it—
no, indeed, I didn't—;
on the whole, you figure,
the spirit's speed
is zero, but you know
when it hits you, like
Germany and jealousy,
the mind's ill season
bearing its black fruit;
jambalayas, jackalopes,
gerrymandered districts,
germinal, consisting of
coastal regions, orchards,

and flowering automobiles,
each with its reasons
and a policy for collisions
and making love in the wreck,
and the ardent are burning
for the one thing that outlives them,
being our lord Desire.

KeeP whatever you can,
lose whatever you must,
the five new wisdoms
have already outpaced you,
and the gander prays for fall;
let no man squander
the money he never had,
and let our time pass faster
out of history's plan;
it will only be for the rescue
that we so readily die,
only for the branding
that sheep lie idly by,
we are not on earth forever,
our wills have been undone,
fate has several answers
but offers only one,
god bless us in our towers
of solitude and lime trees,
where thought slows and freezes
and love extends its hand,
no man can say he's forgotten
by fate and a million suns,
the way out is the way in,
there is nowhere to run.

Leap not upon the hour
nor even memory's years
with their retrofitted weather
and pointed sundial shadows;
each petrifying second
I see them point at me,
I seek my angel habit
and my convenient demon,
for today a lonely greeting
stains the hearts of the blessed
while the criminal gets away clean;
this eye of which we speak
scours the world with seeing
the random shapes of magic,
its appetite for experience
desires to emerge at last
in the novel of the world,
but in the shape of a man,
his rectitude and pallor,
as he washes his gray hands.

My cry is like an orchid
at the rim of the volcano—
what a pleasant village
night and I fall into,
ceremonial in our drifting,
floating, unwinged procession,
by love founded & unbound
in the century's early blankness:
who yearned and did mean it,
burned but also bled it
in the functionary company
of meanwhile and endurance;

yea, we built our burning tent
in that penumbra,
ardent yet hard-hearted,
as real as green gold,
with seven laden kisses
to give to the lady in red,
vestigial cries from the garden
where the suffering was to begin
and did begin in earnest—
which cross to fly today,
with no lack of training,
into the blue, bewildered,
which grave to enter, in natty attire,
whose hand to hold in the darkness
of the closest place in the world,
and not feel that our mothers
and fathers preferred to die first,
with names and now with numbers,
passing beyond their fervor?

No eye is ever still;
even in dreams the drama
of dust rising and rain falling,
what the world resorts to
when signs are the time of day,
our clothing is discarded,
the voice of night has hardened,
and a greeting, a lonely greeting,
is all we have for comfort,
along with prime numbers
and worlds of sand shifting
across the coastal highways,
while the stone figures
of children crying

observe the architecture
of our momentum,
its chastenings and gateways
that run like spiders
though the Eastern Carolinas,
until the metaphysical,
constructed of granite heirlooms,
of spittle and feathers,
finds the man it was seeking,
and the melancholy reign
of Happiness begins,
lasting thirty-four seconds,
longer than love's last breath,
but less than death's first kiss.

Of the sky blue, eye blue,
in the night's light, owl's flight,
soul breaking, earth shaking
at the center of disquiet.

Perhaps this is the song
I forgot to sing and gesture,
that escaped by the window
and sang itself in the street,
that veered, rhymed, and returned,
disguised as magic, had magic existed,
& concluding, if songs conclude,
as the thickness of things:
the sobriety of the pavement,
an archangel wearing a hat,
the cane he carries eternal;
that is, from Everlasting,
and the boat he rows goes
as if propelled by spirits,

and the boat's anchor floats
like a needle on the water—
forgive me, I didn't sing them
but rang them on the phone,
arranged for them a pattern
of herringbone and green willow,
a candle of tallow, a blue pillow.

Quiet, yes, it's quiet inside
a wave falling, quiet as a house
just before its burning and the loud,
industrial sound of a thought
as it meets with resistance:
dreamlike, the trees,
raging in their places,
and the light perfectly restless
between two sandstone buildings;
apparent, the world, even
in secret, from the bold assertion
of a darkened ceiling
(for children who sleep alone
in the creaking houses of Ohio)
to the miniature decision
of one cell to replace another
in the blood running downstream,
but neither life's attrition
nor the daily falsehoods of living,
nor the filmmaker's stunning mastery,
nor the uneasy birth of the first idea,
will save us from this century
and its lifetime of breathing;
the truth is amorous, darling,
its lips are a thick incision.

Restless, the eye for distance.

Steady, the heart that loves.

Tearful, the final diary entry
of a tyrant on the run;
in thickets of light and fists of shadow,
his sentences create a clearing
in the black forest of thought,
and the field where his body lies
is surrounded by the memory
that the thicket once was there
(no forest, no clearing; no light,
no leaning), while the city is a thicket
of the buildings that surround,
and the clearing is a confession
bathed in public light: I did it and
I'm sorry, we did it and we're proud;
our lease on a prairie is the clearing
then the city, where nothing
ever closes, a flickering fire
is the one filled with shadows,
and humans are strewn, as always,
by the light their shadows cast.

Upon: to be the one standing,
to be top gun, to be able, after all,
to comprehend the words
survival and *pride*, even
to fly with utmost kindness
into the flower itself, thus into
an eye that dilates for our pleasure;
we keep openness open,
we give unto those worlds

we believe worth reaching,
for no world is nowhere,
and I am not the one who awakens
on this slow, elusive morning,
nor the one in the mirror,
shifting his weight to smile,
but one who slips from memory
even as he revives a fraction
of the fiction, constructing what
he needs to heal the wound
received, or curls up with the cat
and misses work on Monday,
then Tuesday and also Wednesday,
who feels June's havoc
and all the sunlight wasted
when it falls beyond the field,
who has no master plan,
who races through the garden,
takes longer and longer rides,
until eternity's up to speed
and life's the car crashing.

Vim and vigor, verve,
what nerve the past had,
what a world we had to live in,
though of course
our roles were small,
and Echo couldn't stop singing
its only original song
from the sea-cliffs and doorways,
for the truth of our lives is this:
no wolf in the work, no work;
the unvalved voice of stone
remembers and never forgives,

so eat the fruit but save the rind,
take your time but also make it.

What will our books do
when we're not here to read them,
when our eyes go south
and speech gives out,
leaving forever sideways;
what circular panegyrics,
final statements, and green hours
are we required to live through,
what passing of two autumns
does last love delight in;
permit us then, we beg you,
to awaken from our names,
spread snow over syntax
encrusted with sentiments
homely yet hard-hearted,
what a final costume party
to kill or be killed in,
as the century's song passes,
dragged by love from border
to border, boarder number one,
post-lyrical, pre-historical.

Xylophone, they call it,
because it's made of wood
and then mallet-beaten,
virtuosity of a man knowing
where to strike his next god-damn,
an archeological wonder
of music built to crumble;
yes, it says, I am guilty
of the words *one* and *two*;

I have committed *next*
before there was a *now*,
And now *now* swoons,
because I have conceived
too poorly or too richly,
and the word of which I'm guilty
lies with a broken back,
with no one else to speak it,
its power and vocation
washing out and washing in
like an agitated sea
alone with its own thinking,
the ardor of the swindle
and the fervor of the deal,
for if there were not one
there could not be many,
and if there were not zero
there could not be one,
nor am I yet my world,
except for what I discover
in the violence of another.

Yes, she said yes,
yellow is not the color
of my true love's hair,
to which you responded,
forms are firm, shapes shift,
but as the earth reminds us,
soft things are surprising;
you feel you finally know them
when they pass out of existence,
like the scent of baking bread
that made the bakery live,
for there is indeed a place

where we are required to go
late some Sunday morning,
where we'll drink delicious tea
and fall asleep in our chairs,
while from somewhere near,
a piano solo survives
its ceaseless repetition,
so seamlessly broken
it becomes desire,
that rare excess of being
that rises as a grain in wood
to be read and understood,
in a language south of the mind.

Zero degree of solitude
is what we all hope for, to be
a colorful part of the clamor,
where nothing ever dies
but just leaves town for a while,
and the new that appears
has such confidence of being
that it lightens whatever it touches;
like snow that clings to the window,
it's just like you, dear reader,
to offer the watery light of your eyes,
to stare with smudged glasses
into our gleaming cave, where
we who stir for your attention
decide who must go forth
and who must be submerged,
standing nimbly as shadows
at the edge of the pool, flexing
our muscles or throwing kisses
Narcissus caught his death of,

so please pretend you are ours
for an hour this afternoon;
while the others are dying of love,
or catching up on their sleep,
please descend the ladder of sense,
come down to us, pale star,
descend with your reasons
to where all thought begins,
and bring with you , we beg,
one beautiful word, impure,
in the voice of the fox
and dachshund, of dry sticks
and of the bending green,
that makes all things real;
bring the softest skin, the
longest life, and life itself,
that we may bravely touch
and someday understand.

Paul Hoover is the author of fifteen books of poetry including *Desolation: Souvenir* (2012), *En el idioma y en la tierra* (bilingual edition translated by María Baranda, Conaculta, 2012), *Sonnet 56* (2009), *Edge and Fold* (2006), and *Poems in Spanish* (2005), which was nominated for the Bay Area Book Award. With Maxine Chernoff, he edited and translated *Selected Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin*, which won the PEN USA Translation Award in 2009. With Nguyen Do, he edited and translated the anthology, *Black Dog, Black Night: Contemporary Vietnamese Poetry* (2008). *Beyond the Court Gate: Poems of Nguyen Trai*, edited and translated with Nguyen Do, was published in 2010. With María Baranda, he has translated the *Poesías* of San Juan de la Cruz.

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