

Language: A Love Poem

—after Neruda

When I say your hair
is the color of a moonless night
in which I've often been lost,
I mean approximately that dark.
And the dove outside our window
is no symbol, merely wakes us
at dawn, its mate a grayish creature
that coos quite poorly. Peace
is an entirely different bird.
The rose, to me, signifies the rose,
and the guitar signifies
a musical instrument
called the guitar. At other times
language is a slaughterhouse,
a hammering down, its subjects hanging
from hooks, on the verge
of being delicious. When I say
these things to you it's to watch
how certain words play
themselves out on your face,
as if no one with imagination
can ever escape being a witness.
The whale, for example, no matter
its whiteness, is just a mammal
posing as a big fish, except
of course if someone is driven
to pursue it. That changes everything.
Which is not to suggest I don't love
the depth of your concealments.
When I say your name over and over
it's because I cannot possess you.