

Is abstract and ordinary. The lichen covers the grave-
Stones like words cover a page. We read them like

First graders, balancing the mystery on the tip
Of our fingers: what we can pronounce is ours. What

We cannot, we pass to the one behind us, a process of
Extremes, small but opposite. An *avocet* is hardly

An extreme of a *pelican*: neither is musical except for
Their names. One has a needle-beak, the other a mailpouch.

They are everything birds can be in their present moments.
Their pasts might tell them to: ignore the albatross,

Avoid loud parties and some Italian mussels, follow
Out to sea any promising rusty barges. In the sand,

We are the terrible children playing with our whizzbangs.
When in doubt we look up, look down, smile, or hold on.

We have little in relation to these birds except the past,
A symbol on our tombstones, a wing slicing a piece of sky.

On our own private beaches, which we inexplicably share,
If we must pass notes to each other, let them be musical.

HABLAR, APRENDER, VIVIR

If I said there's a guarantee
The wash will dry in the sun

Today, the words were learned
Words, like promises of new

Lives after old lives have
Been bleached and slapped

And twisted into shape they
Were never meant to be. Speaking

Seriously is like driving a car
Seriously — appreciation by a few

Passengers, enough. I heed stops,
Yield, remember rules glued in

Memory. I don't always know
The wet paint is wet until I touch it.

What I don't learn in school has much
To be said about it. Then why not

Speak up, over the radio waves
Tumbling the dry air. I speak like

Exposed brick under stucco, sometimes.
Or thick stew, or crumbled cheese.

Speak for the hard luck lookers-on.
Escape hatch, hull of the unfinished ship,

Rabbit hutch. Someone else's echo is
Most marvelous — I can think it's

Mine if I want. The want of need's lack.
Come clearly into the forest so

I can see you. You who speak, learn
The steps, live through these days.