

HOUSES BY THE SEA

Remember the little houses by the sea?
They were so sad! Pastels infused with gray—
it was foggy there—and gray blinds in the windows,
or a gray potted plant.

And the old women,
like inkblots in the fog, who tottered home
with bags of groceries from the corner Safeway.
Potatoes, peas: what soups, in what dark kitchens,
would they prepare? For whom?

We shook our heads.
But we were happy, all of us riding the streetcar
out to the end of the line, on Fridays after work,
with bread and cheese and wine. Over the dunes
we'd walk to the edge of the sea, to the mild Pacific,
in whose waters, often, a dull red sun was fading:
so slowly the ocean turned from gold to lead.
We'd light a fire.

And up and down the beach,
in infinite regression, shone other fires:
dozens of them, as far as the eye could see—
then night came on, opaque, and a cold wind.
Therefore we huddled close.

Somebody played
a guitar, we sang, we drank our wine—we thought
it was given to us alone to be young forever!