

OLD WOMAN

A white morning.
A gull lifts, silent
into the sky.
I watch the old woman
there in her chair
at the edge of the sea.
She turns, and I see her eyes—
dark, the color
beginning to leave them,
and suddenly I am she—
my hands bony
in my lap.
Talking to this middle-
aged woman, explaining
the misunderstanding
with my body.
How this morning
I ran into the sea
only my body
kept trailing behind,
the way it is in the mountains
when you call out,
and your voice
comes back to you, after . . .
I am telling
the woman, using my hands
to show her these two
things: me
and my body.
My hands
used to be very white,
like yours,
I'm saying, but she
is backing away,
the way a wave
does, just when it reaches you.

I am backing away
from the old woman,
who keeps talking
about waves, about echoes.
Or rather we're sitting
side by side,
that is I think
she's still there,
watching the waves, in the steady
sunlight.

VISITING BORGES

The whole time the young man reads to him
he is thinking Borges is like his house—
sad, empty—oh not the attic
of course, but the parlor.

The floor has large black and white tiles—
the kind you'd imagine even a blind man
could see, so maybe Borges is lost
in the pattern. The young man is a stranger,
he might be thinking. Big. Probably handsome.
Why should he sit and read to an old man?

He has wondered which house
he will die in—in Austin, Nara, Buenos Aires—
oh so many—as if he had not long ago shrunk
the world
till it fit like a small chamber around him.

Or maybe the young man is right: the old man is
the house, which is also the world . . .
But the, where is . . . the world?
Have we lost it?
Are we to depend simply
on our sense?