

In Fluorescence

One handled, dimpled body
folded over the other,

our toothpastes are kissing,
two tubes in a medicine cabinet

otherwise Rembrandt-unromantic,
its glass shelves lit like slides

in a microscope, its camel-color
painted metal cave colder under

closer inspection. *Inspection*,
one of those Latinate words

for looking: we see so many
specimens we hardly notice.

Too circumspect already, I know,
this scrubbed peony, baby still life.

May I plead innocence or
maternity? Anything in this

medicine is by now routine but
in love we say what's been said

in an echolalia, like a parrot
the Enlightenment thought

the paradigmatic stupid animal
saying without knowing why

what's been said's been said,
although nobody listens so

go ahead and say it, said Gide
with defensive and offensive

parry and thrust, one motion.
In bed at night I ask no one I know

to exist if I might endure pain
without disconnecting from it

the way that false Buddhist,
the cynic, does.

Brush your teeth and go to bed
where a warm man waits, I hear

the voiceless parrot
that is most of thought plead—

gone hoarse, I imagine
the parrot a Catholic cardinal

taught the apostolic creed, I read
in Buffon, grinning in his ink

an infectious grin. Smiling down
from a smile, in the night

of a difficult year, I reassess
in fluorescence my irises

colored earth or sky or water
and always, whether cold

or re-embered, a tiger's-eye fire
twice escapes my black holes.

Dilated or contracted, what lies
in wait is nothing but the daily

beatified: time grinds that we
might de-degrade, claims the body

tangling into sheets, the man
whose love is not bluster.