

DEAR RICHARD LEDERER, THANKS FOR *LOOKING AT LANGUAGE*
AND FOR SHARING YOUR LOVE OF WORDS

YOU CAN SAY ANYTHING YOU WANT, YESSIR,
BUT IT'S THE WORDS THAT SING, THEY SOAR
AND DESCEND . . . I BOW TO THEM . . . I LOVE
THEM, I CLING TO THEM, I RUN THEM DOWN,
I BITE INTO THEM, I MELT THEM DOWN . . . I
LOVE WORDS SO MUCH . . . THE UNEXPECTED
ONES . . . THE ONES I WAIT FOR GREEDILY OR
STALK UNTIL, SUDDENLY, THEY DROP. . .
VOWELS I LOVE . . . THEY GLITTER LIKE
COLORED STONES, THEY LEAP LIKE SILVER
FISH, THEY ARE FOAM, THREAD, METAL, DEW .
. . I RUN AFTER CERTAIN WORDS . . . THEY ARE
SO BEAUTIFUL THAT I WANT TO FIT THEM ALL
INTO MY POEM . . . I CATCH THEM IN
MIDFLIGHT, AS THEY BUZZ PAST, I TRAP
THEM, CLEAN THEM, PEEL THEM, I SET MYSELF
IN FRONT OF THE DISH, THEY HAVE A
CRYSTALLINE TEXTURE TO ME, VIBRANT,
IVORY, VEGETABLE, OILY, LIKE FRUIT, LIKE
ALGAE, LIKE AGATES, LIKE OLIVES . . . AND I
STIR THEM, I SHAKE THEM, I DRINK THEM, I
GULP THEM DOWN, I MASH THEM, I GARNISH
THEM, I LET THEM GO . . . I LEAVE THEM IN MY
POEM LIKE STALACTITES, LIKE SLIVERS OF
POLISHED WOOD, LIKE COALS, PICKINGS
FROM A SHIPWRECK, GIFTS FROM THE WAVES
. . . EVERYTHING EXISTS IN THE WORD . . .

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