***An Inch of Air Belongs to Itself***

It was hunger or meddling boredom

how I found each snapdragon flower’s set

of pliable jaws and dusty yellow

spikes, soft, rooted deep

in the delicate hinge…

It was summer (when? Just

summer, evening, the open windows

some version of purple), I wanted

to do what anyone would do: Pressing

them open again and again, watching

the mouth appear, the throat, the lenticular

interior which was always there

like a made thing—right sides pinned together, only

no one would ever turn them out—

I wanted to

tear off the lower jaw, release that

slip of snapped light (or air? Or some *thing?*

Are air and light and matter the same?

I missed that part of school, missed

the part where they told us

what everything’s made of, what exactly *is*

the nothing inside a flower’s mouth,

nothing burnished by petals

the way silver is rubbed and rubbed with cloths),

make it *do* something, open again and again…

touch the hum of self-contained color, how

such fragility muscles into the world

creased and mellow, lit, indiscriminate.

Simone Weil says we don’t know the difference

between looking and eating. I say

we are always trying to determine

where the light comes from, even though

of course we know there is only one

massive, chemical source. Even though of course

I know these outlines, these patches of navy-washed

orange and scarlet spills are simply dying

bodies eating light—isn’t there any reward

for leaving things alone?

Life, in fact, is not sacred.

In a field of blossom and shadow, no one

can say, “this is blossom,

this shadow.” No one can separate

the sun from a room on a two-block street turning

purple, then dark, then embryonic,

then just before. And if

the small glow goes on, there, inside, if

while we sleep these flowers do begin to flame

without consecration—unless

to be consecrated is to be willing to die

a mystery—who would really be surprised?

Damp, down here, the summer sings

with forms that blaze and fade, bearing

luminous interiors never used

for any purpose.