

Reading Lips
by Amy Alznauer

Forgive my fingers pressed against your face
To hear by catching the force of air
Expressed, each little stretch, each grimace
And slack, as if by touch I mean to stare.

So intimate for one drawn back by sight,
Your world spread coolly out through distance seen
Not clasped, up close and muggy to you tight
Like mine, nor lost when space drops in between.
We move through different rooms. They say yours fills
Like glass, with some diffuse transparency,
Intangible except when color spills
Across the gap yet keeps your privacy.

And still in dark your distance holds.
You can't collapse the open reach and spread
To be wrapped up like me with cotton folds
The room drawn small around you in the bed.
But what if touch could see? Could bring
In one collective sweep this place to mind?
All things would rush against my skin and fling
No heat or texture just the airy blind

Caress of wood, the fabric's droop, and fleet
Of dust. Each cornered, blunt, or jagged shape
And dreg of space would rain, a single sheet
Of tactile sense like vision's steady drape.

I'd feel you flush, your body's breadth and height,
Upon my length. I'd know at once this room.
And you inside the room. Your every sleight
Of hand and careless gesture I'd consume.

Instead, I sit before your gaze, submit
To some ubiquitous touch, and let you trace
My frame, envelop me. So please admit
The barest press of fingers to your face.