

## Study of the Object

1

The most beautiful is the object  
which does not exist

it does not serve to carry water  
or to preserve the ashes of a hero

it was not cradled by Antigone  
nor was a rat drowned in it

it has no hole  
and is entirely open

seen  
from every side  
which means  
hardly anticipated

the hairs  
of all its lines  
join  
in one stream of light

neither  
blindness  
nor  
death  
can take away the object  
which does not exist

2

mark the place  
where stood the object  
which does not exist  
with a black square  
it will be  
a simple dirge  
for the beautiful absence

manly regret  
imprisoned  
in a quadrangle

3

now  
all space  
swells like an ocean

a hurricane beats  
on the black sail

the wing of a blizzard circles  
over the black square

and the island sinks  
beneath the salty increase

4

now you have  
empty space  
more beautiful than the object  
more beautiful than the place it leaves  
it is the pre-world  
a white paradise  
of all possibilities  
you may enter there  
cry out  
vertical-horizontal  
perpendicular lightning  
strikes the naked horizon

we can stop at that  
anyway you have already created a world

5

obey the counsels  
of the inner eye

do not yield

to murmurs mutterings smackings

it is the uncreated world  
crowding before the gates of your canvas

angels are offering  
the rosy wadding of clouds

trees are inserting everywhere  
slovenly green hair

kings are praising purple  
and commanding their trumpeters  
to gild

even the whale asks for a portrait

obey the counsels of the inner eye  
admit no one

6

extract  
from the shadow of the object  
which does not exist  
from polar space  
from the stern reveries of the inner eye  
a chair

beautiful and useless  
like a cathedral in the wilderness

place on the chair  
a crumpled tablecloth  
add to the idea of order  
the idea of adventure

let it be a confession of faith  
before the vertical struggling with the horizontal

let it be  
quieter than angels  
prouder than kings

more substantial than a whale  
let it have the face of the last things

we ask reveal o chair  
the depths of the inner eye  
the iris of necessity  
the pupil of death  
–Zbigniew Herbert