

SUNGLASSES

A thin mask
for the outward eye.
Muting colors,
tinted gray and black,
vision shaded
with a light numbness,
a mild inebriation.

The eyes rest easy—
they crave light
but tire of it too.

Their virtue lies
in how little they let in,
how little they let out.

There's a quiet freedom
in looking where one pleases:
a loophole in the demands
of visual propriety.

The eye is always curious,
always wants to wander—
to study detail,
to admire or gawk:
at another's clothing,
physique,
facial hair,
the arc of a brow.

But visual curiosity
is the vice of creeps,
and so we feign
disinterest—
a subdued glance
turned inward,
the reticent eye.

How are eyes
meant to meet?
In some cultures,
eye contact is taboo;
in others,
a sign of respect—

a pleasant way
of saying *hello*,
through the thin slits
of a smile.

The etiquette of eyes
is an ethic of observance.

Yet human beings
are nothing if not inventive,
and always find ways
to stealthily observe
what interests them,
accepting distortions
of secrecy.

This is not to deny
that sunglasses
were designed
to serve a practical need.

Indeed, they were made
to block out the sun.