

Excerpts from the book-length manuscript, The Hours Befote the Little Morning

by Pablo Miguel Martínez

1. The Grotto (2007), published
2. Yours, Sally Hemings (2008), unpublished
Yours, Malinalli (2008), published
3. Printer's Devil (2008), published
4. Poem Beginning with a Line by Louise Glück (2007), unpublished
5. A Brief History of the Texas Rangers (2006), published

The Grotto

Here in the wild caves we bear
only fragile ambitions of beauty:

we are born blind fish
of blind fish—sightless

because that first fearful one
bartered form and light for this

ceaseless calm, traded his precious
glimmer for the placid ever-dark.

The darting impulse at the sight
of hungry gar slowed to a meaningless glide.

And that other ache: all color bleached.

We dream in gray, bereft of sky-change,
time-change, and watered colors, our skins

thinned to expose a pitiable essence;
the need to sheathe effaced

when everything grazed, mated with,
nurtured by, was rendered grotesque.

Here in the wild caves our mindless wish
of eyes, pigment, modesty

drips like an icicle losing
its hold, losing itself.