

## **Ars Poetica**

A Poem should be palpable and mute  
As a globed fruit,

Dumb  
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone  
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown -

A poem should be wordless  
As the flight of birds.

\*

A poem should be motionless in time  
As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon releases  
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter eaves,  
Memory by memory the mind -

A poem should be motionless in time  
As the moon climbs.

\*

A poem should be equal to:  
Not true.

For all the history of grief  
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.

For love  
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea -

A poem should not mean  
But be.

*-Archibald MacLeish (1892-1982)*