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)*