

This longish introduction is to introduce my next poem, which is the title of my new book, which is not out; it will be out in a few months. It so happened that I got a telephone call from a guy and he said I'm the literary editor of a new magazine of interiors, called *Nest* and we would like you to write a poem to go with this feature we are doing on some billionaire's house." And I was sort of hesitating and humming and he said "well you know we'll pay you fifteen-hundred dollars and I said "well I'm not on sale, but I am for sale". But I did tell him "please send me material, send me stuff, send me interviews with the designer" so he sent me two interviews with the designers, two different designers and send me cuttings, fabrics, pictures, all kinds of things. And as I was writing this, I was looking at it and one of the designers said "well you know rooms are never finished." And I said oh, "Rooms are never finished, that could be the title of this poem". So I wrote down rooms are never finished and then, the other designer said "many of my favorite things are broken". And I said, "Aha, that could be the epigraph of my poem". So now I have the title, I have my epigraph, "many of my favorite things are broken" and now to write the damn poem. Then I was at the same time, working on a ghazal, in which my rhyme scheme was the -I sound, like I, sigh, die, and the refrain was the word -in, cry in, die in. So I said, "well why don't I discard the ghazal and create my own form, remembering the word "stanza" in Italian means rooms. So rooms are never finished, I create my own poem in which no stanza really ends; it always leads to the next room with the word in. I'm telling you all this to show you how ingenious I am.

"Rooms Are Never Finished"

In here it's deliberately dark so one may sigh

in peace. Please come in. How long has it been?
Upstairs – climb slowly – the touch is more certain.
You've been, they say, everywhere. What city's left?
I've brought the world indoors. One wants certainty.
Not in art – well, you've hardly changed – but why,

in life. But for small invisible hands, no wall
would be lacquered a rain forest's colors. Before,
these walls had just mirrors (I tried on – for size –
kismet's barest air). Remember? You were
led through all the spare rooms I was to die

in. But look how each room's been refurbished:
This screen in stitches silk-routes a river
down Asia, past laughing Buddhas, Chine
a lantern burning burning burning for
"God to aggrandize, God to glorify"

in (How one passes through such thick walls!).
Candles float past inked-in laborer
but for whose hands this story would be empty,
rooms where one plots only to die, nothing
Dear! but a bare flame for you to come by

in. *Don't touch that vase!* Long ago
its waist, abandoned by scrolling foliage,
was banded by hands, banded quick with omens:

a galloping flood, hooves iron by the river's edge.
O beating night, what could have reined the sky

in? Come to the window: panes plot the earth
apart. In the moon's crush, the cobalt starts
shed light – blue 00 on Russia: the republics porcelain,
the Urals mezzotint. Why are you weeping,
dear friend? Hush, rare quest. Once a passer-by

in tears, his footseps dying, was... well, I rushed
out and he was gone. Out there it's poison.
Out there one longs for all one's ever bought,
for shades that lighten a scene: When the last leaves
were birds spent wingless on trees, love, the cage to cry

in, was glass-stormed by the North. Now that God
is news, what's left but prayer, and ... well, if you
love something, why argue? What we own betters
any tale of God's – no? That framed scroll downstairs
and here! this shell drowned men heard God's reply

in. Listen, my friend. But for quick hands, my walls
would be mirrors. A house? A work in progress,
always. ButL Could love's season be more than this?
I'll wipe your tears. Turn tome. My world would be
mere mirrors cut to multiply, then multiply

in. But for small hands. Invisible. Quick...