You glimpse it in the face of the woman
huddling by the subway station
who goes up to anyone who pauses
to yell into their face
“Everyone in this city fucking hates me.”

As though we have a claim
on anyone we want here, even in the supremacy
of our ugliness, or especially then—each
responsible for each, one sexual family
linked, like amoebas entering the river of

Broadway at 5 PM, or like the sea hare
that mates in chains, the one
in the middle acting as both male and female,
like magic carpets flapping gelatinous
toxic wings. Passing under Grace Church now,

strolling past fetish store
mannequins, coffee shops,
and vertical groceries, past the brick school
like a castle spiny with surveillance cameras,
I think why not undergo this dissolution,

why not relinquish the self.
I slip the vendor a twenty, watching his face
impassive, as I collect my glittering change,
and want to keep watching, want to enter
his life for a moment as he tips his frostbitten
face forward towards his wares—burning flesh—to warm it. The merely personal seeming foolish today, a delusion easily escaped from, pretty, but insignificant like the seahorse in the Union Square pet store unfurling its single leg in its case, straightening it to rise and float over the two devil-red fire shrimp, like any one of us decadent in our loneliness. And I could already make out past the child-smudged glass, the nearly translucent haunch-fins like a secret of personality revealed only to close friends—then out to the other side of the glass where someone is yelling at his wife, someone is shrieking with delight as the chinchilla dances manically across a spinning disk like a communal heart. Okay, there’s room for loneliness, even for devastation in the crowd, so many limits to what you can know about these others, to what they would let you know, and yet who needs these feelings to be truly individual, where does that need come from, that need to be more or less than others, to be different from in order to be real? B told me sometimes that after watching pornography, bodies joined together like sea hares, he talks to his own reflection, goes and stands
Self and Hive

at the window looking through himself
over the city’s streets and towers, that some impulse,
some greed, has heaped and dammed up
like the lines of traffic at the red light below.
B told me what a relief it is, then, and yes,

I can see that—until on the way home we come to
a complete halt at a well-dressed man
sitting right in the middle of the sidewalk
with his cloak spread out behind him,
who looks up at us and points to his mouth.