

SUMMER SILENCE

In graduate school, I spent one summer in Cuernavaca, Mexico, learning Spanish.

Classes for four or five hours a day,
and a lunch with the mother of the family hosting me,—
she talked nonstop and I understood nothing.
She knew, of course: it didn't slow her in the least.

Almost every afternoon in Cuernavaca
there was a rain-shower—
the days mostly started clear and warm
and cooled with the clouds and rain in the afternoon.

I was alone,
far from family and friends—
no phone or internet to connect to anybody I loved.

I would go in the evenings to the *zócalo*,
the small park at the city center,
and write in a restaurant or café.

In that way I did not leave English as I wish to now,
did not leave language behind,
with its electrifying lie that I am a whole person—

the pattern:
morning, school, rain, school, evening in the square:
no illusions:—

I have made my living teaching language for twenty years;
can I teach silence,

the heartbeat of the rain on a corrugated roof,
the rooster before dawn,
the rancheras from open windows that I hear from my home

this summer in the evening
just as I heard them there?

—Brian Glaser

