

LA ONDA

¿*Qué onda?* Around here it means, "What's happening?"
"What's going down?" Mystic initiation, a man tells you,
the first step, where you let go of everything you know,
is like a wave. *If you fight it you drown.*

¿*Qué onda?* *If you fight it, you drown.*
You keep repeating this as the room lifts in the moonlight,
when you can't tell the difference between the walls or the curtains
or the light on your skin or the wide white waste your life can seem.
When you don't know where love lies, or death,
when you don't know what has you in its grip. ¿*Qué onda?*

If you don't move, the anguish will. *Qué onda.*
If you fight, it's the same thing. *Qué onda.*
If you scream no one would understand a word you're saying.
It would mean no more than the crazy rooster
marking off the hours of the night. *Qué onda. Qué onda.*

So, because you want to live, you just ride it, *qué onda,*
like moonlight, foam. You know it is all down there,
the mother drunk and alone, the father who watches
his infant son running through cars and doesn't raise a hand
to stop him, and the one who strokes his daughter
to a dreadful silence, the husband, his face puffed
with pain, *you have done such harm,*
and your sister driving the empty swing bright as a blade up
into your own face, the man forcing you
to go down, go down—

If you fight it, you join the dead for sure.
They are pure. Like stones. Like dirt. And they know
one thing for certain. *Qué onda.*
Swallow it whole, we'll sink like stones.
We'll go, like the man said, down. *Go down*