

What to Do with Words
by Julia Hartwig

What to do with words
that have no object behind them
nothing to touch or taste
on which to rest the eyes
nothing to relate to human temperature

For example the word eternity
sterile pure cold as the glow of stars
leading us into a desert of interplanetary space
into diluted air the dead bottom of darkness
a word with no temptation no odor no color
a sound no tamed animal would obey
even the wind is more palpable than eternity
a huge number has at least an appearance of countability

But eternity? Once called up it rattles around the skull
once created it can't be erased from the dictionary
ownerless wild and monumental
one more proof of our madness