

HAVANA, 1990-1517

The bearded ones, so easy to copy - you
read the morning paper and at their meeting
you stand: "Companeros — the revolution,
it requires we transform the capital

into eternal barracks!" And on the late
round for the Committee for the Defense
of the Revolution you sit down opposite
the man and woman, strangers in the park,

light a cigarette (the Americans' taste
better) as the security people said to do,
listen to them talk of old Daniel de Ribera
of Valdepenas, denounced for washing

his hands before meals. What it has to do
with Cuba you miss, but the man's accent
is Castilian, that will go in your report,
and now you wish they'd stop their talk,

for your shift is up, and you want to listen
to the Miami stations, and you remember
the secret verses your mother taught you,
the candles she lit at home, not at church.