

Wolferl in Rome, 1770

by [Melaney Poli](#) in the [January 16, 2019](#) issue

*Geniuses are the luckiest of mortals . . .*

—*W. H. Auden*

Certainly you want it, but that's the point:  
you love it, it has mastered you. And you're here  
in this chapel to submit, adoring, passionate.

You can't help it if the notes seep into your brain,  
soak your memory without asking, make a map  
of themselves, if the music just imprints itself

like an irresistible kiss. You used to think this  
happened to everyone, after all. If it's nothing  
to summon up the spirit, set an entire choir alight

in the cathedral of your mind, it's just a parlor trick  
to raise a body you have never known, but that in  
its sounding contours and colors have grasped

more surely than ever had you seen it with your eyes.  
It's what you wanted, to have this gorgeous feather  
for your collection. You know you have won,

will get away with everything, astound the jeweled  
hands and miters, to say the least. And so dazzled,  
they will no doubt miss the key of sadness

in which the clear tones of your caprice have been  
inscribed: asking the question you only half admit  
to yourself in the small hours of the morning,

the question you still think happens to everyone,  
that everyone too only half dares admit,  
and nobody dares to ask.

