

The Quiet World

In an effort to get people to look
into each other's eyes more,
the government has decided to allot
each person exactly one hundred
and sixty-seven words, per day.

When the phone rings, I put it
to my ear without saying hello.
In the restaurant I point
at chicken noodle soup. I am
adjusting well to the new way.

Late at night, I call my long
distance lover and proudly say
I only used fifty-nine today.
I saved the rest for you.

When she doesn't respond, I know
she's used up all her words
so I slowly whisper I love you,
thirty-two and a third times.
After that, we just sit on the line
and listen to each other breathe.

—Jeffrey McDaniel