

POPPY DE GARMO

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COURTESY THE ARTIST

JACQUELINE BERGER

Gone

Could you do without your job,
your title, your office, its little window;
could you do without paper clips, the parking permit?
Could you do without eco mode,
the spin cycle? Without cast iron, the Dutch oven,
without olive oil, green garlic? Could you do without
apples, the blender, the toaster, do without the timer
on the microwave you use for so many purposes; could
you do without time
broken into fifteen minutes, into eight,
do without a clock, without a calendar—
was it ten years ago or twenty?
Could you do without your dead,
do without dragging them back
from wherever it is they've gone?
Do without the nightgown, the robe, the pillow?
Without the medicine cabinet, the vials and tablets?
Could you forgo the glass of water on the night table?
Could you go without night, without its minutes
in the dark before sleep, without the one
who lies next to you, without whom
you would wander the seas,
lost vessel looking for home? Could you
do without home, its pitched roof,
its hill, its sign that says Hill; do without the dog
in the window, without his barking
when a stranger approaches?
Could you do without the stranger
bearing witness or asking for money?
Could you do without money, the twenties
folded into your wallet, the money in the bank
you never see, the system of money, the spinning
of its wheels, its engines like air?
Could you do without engines,
without clockworks, combustion,
without the revving to start,
the humming inside as they run?

Jacqueline Berger is the author of three books of poetry: *The Gift That Arrives Broken*, winner of the Autumn House Poetry Prize; *Things That Burn*, winner of the Agha Shahid Ali Prize, University of Utah Press; and *The Mythologies of Danger*, winner of the Bluestem Award and the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award. Her poetry has also appeared in numerous journals including *The Iowa Review*, *River Styx*, and *New Millennium Writings*. She teaches creative writing and directs the graduate program in English at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, California. She was born and raised in Los Angeles and now lives in San Francisco with her husband.