

CAREN CANIER

L'amica geniale (Elena Ferrante), 2018
Matte acrylic on paper, 22 x 30 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

Prayer for the Boy Lost Inside the Boy

I'll see you among the cruel things
winter chases south or hibernates
& in the particular cruelties winter
invites into our limbs & lungs.
The earth's always too soft or callous
to leave the buried be. Shovel snap,
slippage. But never an enduring
silence. I'll see you in the shadow
play sparrows paint up & down
the bedroom wall, in that partially
illuminated movement just outside
candle reach. & for when there isn't
such a soft darkness in the house,
I'll see you in the endless vigils kids
keep locked inside so the world won't
see they haven't given up yet. Maybe
I'll see you in their giving up too.
This is how I bathe my dead:
with a pumice stone & words
that mean less & less the louder
I speak them. I don't think I mean
a damn thing I've ever said above
a whisper. That's why I speak in wails
& roars, why I see the whole or nothing
at all—my face in all faces, in yours, vice versa. I know
it's just a matter of time before I stop
seeing what I need to see in whatever is kind enough to
lend me its image. The kindest
thing about being human is that everything gifts us its
image—for a moment or forever.

John Sibley Williams is the author of *As One Fire Consumes Another*, winner of the Orison Poetry Prize (Orison Books, 2019); *Skin Memory*, winner of the Backwaters Prize (Backwaters Press, 2019); *Disinheritance* (Apprentice House, 2016); and *Controlled Hallucinations* (FutureCycle Press, 2013). A nineteen-time Pushcart nominee, Williams is the winner of numerous awards, including the Wabash Prize for Poetry, Philip Booth Poetry Prize, American Literary Review Award for Poetry, Phyllis Smart-Young Prize in Poetry, Nancy D. Hargrove Editors' Prize for Poetry, Confrontation Poetry Prize, and Laux-Millar Raleigh Review Poetry Prize. He serves as editor of the *Inflectionist Review* and works as a literary agent. Previous publishing credits include: the *Yale Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, the *Southern Review*, *Sycamore Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, the *Massachusetts Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Saranac Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Third Coast*, and various anthologies. He lives in Portland, Oregon.