

VOLKER BRAUN

Last Residence On Earth

For Pablo Neruda

(written on September 22, 1973)

Spilling from tanks in darkness
Octopuses suck on his Arcadian fence.
The private-eye roaches
Of the public regime squat
Sweating in their stupidity
On his stairway.
The eavesdropping ears
Of the militia hang
Like festering snot
On the telephone wires.
Immortal in their shame and Hispanic terror
Corpses wait, with cocked pistols,
Under his trees.
But this is certain:
In his besieged room the poet
Speaks as he has never before
In his incinerating life
The fatal truth.

Translated from the German by Hannelore Hahn