Mantra for a Dark December Night
Paul Mariani

At the interstices between the word & silence
between this time and no time
between what the word groans after & the no-word
that answers to nothing & is everything, thy mercy
Lord have mercy, Lord Jesus mercy.
Between the Utterered & the Uttering & the Word
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy
on this sinner, who dares not lift my eyes
sweet Jesus mother mercy.
Mercy on me the sinner mercy.
You who know my heart better
than it knows itself, you, my heart,
sweet Jesus mercy. You who
come among us, who took on our flesh
our tears our sweating selves, O Lord have mercy,
Lamb, sweet Lamb have mercy. You know
I love you Lord, you know the cost, sweet one,
sweet Jesus, Lord, be with me I beg thee hear me
and let my cry come on to thee here in this room,
this lonely office, this wring-wracked bed,
this road this car this cart whatever
and what does anything at all matter
Creator Lord of matter, Mater God, whom
I have glimpsed beside the candle on the darkened
altar when I least expected or deserved it
Lord sweet Lord have mercy on me the sinner.

The poem by Boston College English Professor Paul Mariani appears in the December 24, 2007 issue of America magazine.