

# Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

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Volume 11 | Issue 1

Article 59

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June 2011

## What do you

John Nieves

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### Recommended Citation

Nieves, John (2011) "What do you," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1, Article 59.  
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol11/iss1/59>

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Nieves: What do you

# WHAT DO YOU

**JOHN A. NIEVES**

The sentence ended without punctuation,  
just Lake Michigan's continual failure  
to push through the pilings of the pier—  
a wind-up toy stuck in a corner.

Almost a question—  
a shard of utterance.  
I could have pressed you to finish,

but the lake was in my veins,  
polluted, swarming with lamprey,  
unable even to desire strength.

There were only two paths:  
one back down the dock toward  
a lifetime of stale smiles and car exhaust,  
the other,

an icy dive  
a desperate breast-stroke aimed  
at that one narrow passage to the sea.