

FUGITIVE SHEETS

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maps

*Le Village Artisanal*

Saint-Louis, Senegal

Palm trees in the night  
air: with witches' hair  
they shake out streetlamps.

Earth frees their clapping  
hands as they bend and fan  
our fire in the dry

season. Desert wind,  
sing me a song in  
the rhythm of rain;

lend me the mystery  
of love; revolve me  
like phoenix aflame.

## *Desert Drowning*

Matam, Senegal

The tickle of sweat at hollow of knee  
sends me shivering despite the noon heat,  
with each step sinking deeper into sand.

My legs float up in front of my eyes,  
as I tip my canteen. Drained, water buys  
a prickle of sweat at hollow of knee.

The sun sears your hands in their frantic mime:  
You submerge, short of air, for the third time.  
With each breath bearing deeper into sand,

I lean down, taking the waves on my back,  
while desert roses prick at my feet, like  
the licking of sweat at hollow of knee.

In your tumbling gown you waver along,  
aimlessly courting the glitter ahead  
with each glance gazing deeper into sand.

The city, carved and crested in wind, keeps  
its distance as we pitch forward and creep,  
a trickle of sweat at hollow of knee;  
with each stroke sinking deeper into sand.

## *Incident*

Nouakchott, Mauritania

At dusk we soak like raisins our frail  
throats in the medicinal musk of gin.  
Two women argue by our window, their pail  
of water spills, as oiled chocolate skin  
slips in indigo; from head to toe a veil  
askew, only their eyes revealed. One thin  
hand cracks the air. Throaty, sibilant, a wail  
flashes from her ebony-handled knife. Kin  
they were: The younger her husband's second wife.  
Both bound to a jealous nomad for life  
while his wrinkled eyes, slit against the sand, fall  
on younger bellies: unpurchased, not yet shut  
away. Gin stains the rose-red clay of our hut  
as we break forbidden bottles on the wall.

## *Equator Road*

Busia, Uganda

Safe house: a saffron gecko,  
cocked, skims the cracks between wall  
and rock, then slams rapid fire  
head in stucco; splayed claws cling.

Feathers dipped in liquid pearl  
sway, coating rain clouds grey  
where fever-glazed mango weeps:  
that slice of sugar-tipped sun.

From solitude a cricket  
metronome and locust trill:  
dusk imprints on shadow, seeps  
as wax beneath her worn seal.

Then sleep sweet at call to prayer,  
caress of dragonfly's wing  
along frayed flesh, soft air  
melting the curve of your lip.

## *Pas de Trois*

New York City

The three of them sit at the bar:  
the man undecided between  
his woman and the girl.

The woman twirls her glass and her pearl  
necklace, one in each hand. Touching  
her man's arm she mentions music.

He slips his woman's grip and  
tangles the girl's hair into curls  
around his thin tan hands.

She edges out of her seat and whirls  
into dance, fluid as honey,  
with the woman. Syncopated

by the strobe light the woman  
and girl embrace, unfurling  
their bodies to the beat.

*En pointe, plie, releve* they hurl  
each other into bold ballet.  
Amused, the man captures the girl

in his arms and claims her shy  
kiss. She slips inside her winter  
coat and waves goodbye.

*Evidence of Lunacy*

San Francisco

a paper clip, its outer curve  
straightened to pierce your worn  
pink eraser (out of sight

out of mind; confined to insane  
asylum) when identical  
anger twisted your mouth weeks

later I shot imitation  
pearls through each ear only to find  
bruised flesh weeping infection

## *Cape Cod Summer*

Tourists gather to float  
in the amniotic sea  
until the salt

concentrated  
on their skin hits  
the level of their blood

then crowd aboard boats  
scanning the waves  
for spouts

while the contour  
of the humpback's tail  
appears in their wake

or track at sundown the goldfish  
darting through rocks  
in a lily pond

on the dunes where  
an ancient oranda's fin  
melts among fallen leaves

## *Still Life*

Oakland

Petals of silken floss, color  
shading as violin bows slant  
in concert, interlock – a tight  
weave shaped to block out light.

Black ash petals drift downwind  
flames flare on the horizon  
brighter than the crimson  
god melting in the sky.

Dense air drags at my hand  
slurs into each pattern new  
texture and tonality: blue  
iris distinct from violet  
roses full-blown and prim  
among ebony and ivory.

## *Requiem*

Springfield

Not the grizzled and thickened prodigy  
replaying with hooded eyes his Debussy,  
nor the cosmopolitan in twelve-tone  
minimalizing his risks to the bone,  
nor the fanatic archangel who blended  
our ninety voices into eight, four or one  
perfect voice as the score demanded.

But instead you: the deceiver, mixer  
of *zauberflotte* and *trompette* with *vox*  
*humana*. Your best trick was your own part:  
your bloodshot eyes and palsied hands darting  
as you transform from whiskey-breath to shy  
caresser. Among the ranks of my heart  
your hands still echo and stop precisely.

## *Khmer Journal*

Angkor, Cambodia

Constrained by care and beauty, red rose  
petals halo the twelve heads wilting  
on prickled spines, as they bow in heat.

Framed in a window at *Angkor Thom*,  
two girls cast stones; their temples kiss, long  
tendrils of hair curl as palms in prayer.

Drifting past *Tonle Sap*'s house boats  
at midday, two boys on their fishing  
yacht's bow recline, hands skimming spray.

The young monk drew sunset around us,  
his backdrop a mute *Siem Reap*  
*stupa*, brimful of tiny skulls.

## *Cave of the Beatitudes*

you whose heart yearns pure  
who smears mercy and sparks peace

you who know yourself weak  
and devious yet walk upright:

because you observe my law  
here you will grieve and suffer

treachery, still you hunger  
for justice, for you are blest.

get up holy one fear not –  
tap-rooted in my love

consecrated by delight –  
for I shall soothe you now; feed

from that sweet fruit you bear, drink  
of the spring bathing your feet

deck yourself in lilies, find  
shelter from the sun and wind

that parch hollow men and send  
them spinning down to the sea

## *Kfar Cana*

A welcome in hands brimful  
of pears and a slow smile:  
his water to wine miracle.

Futile to pin such bounty  
down, like some skimmer  
on a Riker mount

In these days of light trap,  
killing jar and shadowbox,  
we yearn for mystery;

Yet robots play musical  
chairs for our home, hustling  
their claim of no safe harbor

in competing dynamics  
until we hear the beat  
of that phoenix, fear and fear.

Float your coracle  
through the channel  
occupied by sirens.

I am near you, holding  
the far corner of your net:  
Here ends the singing.

## *Mount Tabor*

floating lanterns, their parchment aglow  
waltz in a crowded ballroom, paper  
cranes spinning on air trail water:

a thousand souls in flame arc in turn,  
skin slips from their limbs like silver  
scales, mist drifts far above the river.

consider man, work of your fingers  
formed but little lower than angel  
with dominion over all, mindful

of whatsoever cross his path:  
beast of field, fowl in air, fish at sea,  
ordained in might to still enemy

and avenger; you place your glory  
and honor as a crown: head and tail  
unfold heaven, moon and stars set sail

on rippling feathers, earth bows and bends  
in concert as cock and peahen  
reiterate transfiguration.

## *Church of the Nativity*

Bethlehem

here is a little door:  
blackened wood set in stone  
arch within arch, hall in hall;  
a cohort of idle young men,  
*kaffiyehs* drawn over heads,  
slides into her cool, dark womb.

*here is an iron gate:  
its guillotine splits the line  
of tanks spitting tear gas  
and rubber-coated metal  
bullets, round like marbles  
(shooters, ringers), knuckled down.*

here is a narrow door  
whose velvet tatters frame a cave  
smudged by oily smoke;  
a brief descent on tapered  
spiral stairs while a thousand  
tender chants echo wonder.

*here is a sniper tower,  
where Rachel wept and died; false  
witnesses have risen  
up against these children  
playing in the narrow streets  
of three refugee camps.*

here is a tiny door  
vast enough for hand's caress  
and the kisses of my mouth;  
ancient women veiled in black  
stoop swollen backs as Mary  
once bent her pierced heart's knee.

*here is a checkpoint in the wall  
protecting such as breathe  
out violence, whose dragon  
claws crush homes and uproot trees;  
come to Bethlehem and see  
Him whose birth the angels sing.*

## *Wadi Qilt*

Some self-starting principle  
of malevolence at play  
like the Gadarene mirage  
pregnant with evil.

Empty vessels craving oil  
and wine, their intrigue flashes fire  
circles. First on the scene finds  
melting skin: glaze glues clay to kiln.

A toy road curves round hills  
bald and tufted with cactus.  
Crawl into my secret *khan*  
in the sand, this heat swells.

## *Ein Gedi*

Shy soul, her necklace  
of tears pearl by pearl  
comes unstrung; she thirsts,  
blurring night song.

Beyond this desert  
seven cataracts flee  
*Kinneret* to pickle  
in the Dead Sea.

Deep summons deep.  
Fresh springs bubble up  
and all around her flows  
pomegranate wine.

Incense beads on tree  
bark like almond milk  
syrup spreading silk  
over skin before the burn.

## *Gaza*

mountains shake  
and topple, withdraw  
into the sea

into the midst  
of the sea

waves recede:  
spoon, cup, scarf and stone  
mint, orange (crushed)

pulp-stained hand  
torn by tanks  
eager to plow  
under garden

edgily  
turning up secrets  
among the living

restless, they move  
on muddled land

where earth melts  
skin and bones dissolve  
troubling water

## *Cave of the Patriarchs*

Hebron

silence spreads like twilight heat  
trees listless listing toward sleep;  
at home hothouse windows weep

ice cubes in caress of water  
collapse to melt with algae  
as goldfish triad spits stones

three spines bend above the vase  
in our illicit shrine, rose  
heads bow, paper petals fade

tango playing on my mind:  
two flesh merge, *mortise et tenon*,  
a prow parting cruelty

while cleric socialites still  
circling prayer wink at evil,  
judas love, keep their feet still

## *Masada*

What if sparrows are true  
and home is anywhere?  
The tail pipe of a twenty  
year old car locked in a dank  
garage and driven only  
to church on Sunday  
by an elderly lady

Birds build where they will  
indifferent to Jesus,  
that first century Jew  
who raised such a ruckus  
with free food and forgiveness  
that his followers offed him

His eye is on nesting stuff  
a cache of rings and feathers  
where rabbits confect  
an altar behind the armoire  
even the window-box  
reliquary for leopard  
gecko and calico moor.

*Ecce Homo, Via Dolorosa*

Jerusalem

Show me some street cred;  
this town's a haven for drive-bys.  
Stay back, you get too close  
you risk the whites of her eyes.  
Blow her away – in and out –  
leave the rubber-necking to me.

Back bite, sweet talk  
posse, whispering campaign, hey –  
you're a social climber – play  
the fear card. I want to see  
her face run like watercolor;  
I want to hear her bleat.

*Hagia Maria Sion*

Jerusalem

Rescue unforeseen  
fretful pelican spearing  
flesh for fledglings

In crack of snare's release  
flash floods explode  
shrub and sheepfold

Aloft on the *wadi*  
teeth worrying air  
ache to swallow

A hover artist  
in abrupt escape  
from the verge of rage

## *Kfar Nain*

offerings bereft of touch  
cold coins brittle roses  
candles half burnt chaplets  
scapulars wedding rings  
golden crucifix hung in chains

a plastic bottle brimming  
chrism drips velvet tracing  
on my palm your fingers warm  
my wrist thumb tenderly  
anointing vague stigmata

in reverse pray prostrate  
as jumbled bits of paper  
in awkward script rivet  
our tongues like Pentecost  
impenetrable yet known

## *Kinneret*

Beneath green glass curved to suckle  
wood and rock, tilapia swarm  
and champagne bubbles branch out.

A breeze toys with acacia  
leaves, an Aeolian harp  
shaken, its *maqam* tunes *saba*.

The sentinel egret tracks  
erratic water fleas, trapped  
as if in amber. Shaft from buoy,

the egret shoots. His talons nocks,  
wing coverts fletching, he spears  
a silver minnow dancing

on still water. Fringed tail dapples  
and diamonds drip from beak to lake  
as fingers fall on *tabla*.

## *The Benedictine Abbey at Tabgha*

Servants of the Lord  
three sheep from a living  
crèche strip the bark off trees

You that stand by night  
at the edge of the sea  
two conies rest on an altar

In the house of God  
angels frame the cloister  
peacocks dreaming shake out light

Lift up your hands  
dragonflies tangle, teal wings  
rise on the spray of seven springs

In this holy place  
where petals multiply  
magenta, cream, rose, red

And bless the Lord  
break fish and bread  
cup hands for new wine

# LITURGIES

## *Matins*

dawn haze lays in tendrils  
of tangled hair  
along the mountain

birdsong echoes  
a pentatonic scale

a yellow jackets clings  
frozen to freesia stem

we pace an inner maze  
where intonation

dusts pollen on faces  
and footsteps quicken

to the reciting note  
chant drenched wet with dew

a spray of watercolor  
round the sun taints us golden  
and melts the bees

## *Vespers*

beads fall through fingers  
as leaves on the evening air  
and the steady slip and swing  
of chain on chain – the censer  
a rosary of smoke

in broken *tessitura*  
a still small voice  
curls round her love and fear  
and waits alone, that prayer  
a careful sleepwalking

## *Compline*

Giotto di Bondone's *Starry Skies Transepts* at the Basilica of St. Francis, in Assisi

dusk settles in  
butterflies hang from grapevines  
wings folded  
feathers on the breath of God

stars wake one by one  
to a slow dance  
as candles bow and flicker  
then burn bright

a pensive *melisma* floats  
on chill air  
breeze lifts damp tendrils of hair  
from cheeks stained

in crimson gouache  
and dusted with dew  
voices fall  
in the night watch

## *Magnificat*

The hungry burst with bread; their wine  
and oil increase. Draw for the sick  
water deep from *Wadi Qilt*.  
Cram fish in the bowls of the blind.

Orphans: uncover a flock  
lost on *Karm'el*, ewes flowing milk.  
Widows: at the edge of each plot  
glean, shaking and pressing your fill.

In *Jezreel* date palms bead fruit,  
combs leak honey, hyssop blooms,  
pomegranates bleed, apricots  
ripen and shrink on the tree.

## *Tenebrae*

a reed spreads wet beads  
ivory black unfolds to cold  
grey sepia viridian

veil of opaque gold foam  
fallen from ladles of milk  
marks an indigo sky

in silence our words fade  
among storylines notes vibrant  
as a cantor drops tone

clusters and voices reach  
a dark triad *faux amis*  
this alto tenor bass chord

cluster bomb fragment tears  
soak the stain where scars pucker  
seven stars die one by one

fruit sheared from the vine  
and choir swells *tessitura*  
above the wash of discord

his deceit triumphant  
beyond belief as when  
prey crave their bait

the crowd sits still  
stunned by the sudden  
cost of creation

## *Vigil*

dark dove a sienna  
shimmer refined  
at the heart of flame

phoenix rising  
from egg of myrrh  
umber to scarlet

nested in grey ash  
coals crimson blood  
flakes of coral resin

spark lily scent  
pollen dusting  
petals vermilion

incense studded candle  
shadows the stranger  
rise up my love

let me look at you  
my fair one come away  
and kiss fresh light, rejoice

this is the night  
carmine voice springs up  
pomegranate wine

## *Michaelmas*

summon his spirit astride  
a horse with saber in hand  
and beast cast, headlong, aside

flame wavers in molten  
spittle as, bathed in its breath,  
three trees wilt in the garden

an artist stirs indigo  
and carmine ink, dragon's tail  
blooms between studded leather

vest and chained waist, pale flesh  
tinted to fit spiky hair;  
faded script on ancient scrolls

vague puzzles lacking vowels  
and punctuated with holes:  
we are this inscrutable word

more than archangels we crave  
an icon to incarnate  
quotidian cruelty

forgotten, fabulous, insane  
that trinity who disposed  
for us a costly grace

## *Anastasis*

Luca Signorelli's *Apocalypse*, at the Duomo in Orvieto

The *shofar* disrupts death's sleep:  
"Adamah!" A strong arm, caress  
of hand on head, fingers twisting hair:  
"Hineni. Adonai?" Shall these bones live?

His dry bones rise to see mirrored  
in the divine face a stranger,  
*mandorla* masking human  
image, mouth and ears and eyes.

Phalanges enfleshed, Adam touches  
foreign features. Bone of his bone,  
heart of his heart this creature of earth  
and target of his treachery.

## *Station IV: Maternal Instincts*

Johannes Ockeghem's *Alma Redemptoris Mater*

The day the angel came, my heart broke.  
To bear a child alone, keep night watch,  
as strangers in our homeland? No. Yes.

My word created you, my son. Now  
familiar men tear you from my arms.

On that cold night in Bethlehem, deep  
in a cave among donkeys and sheep,  
foreign women tore you from my womb.

I open my mouth and words break  
apart. Your voice sings sweet in my heart.

## *Station V: Cinematography*

Are we merely stage hands in a drama  
not our own, extras recruited  
on opening night? 'We need a crowd here,  
hold on.' 'Hey! Jesus is too weak  
to carry that. We can't risk collapse  
before the crucifixion scene.'

'Grab a stunt man: you, Simon of Cyrene.'

As if some soldier casts his burden  
on that man and at the end  
of the mile he leaves it and walks on.

## *Station X: Stripsearch*

Johann Sebastian Bach's *Erbarme dich*, from the *St. Matthew Passion*

“Excuse please, could I have a smoke?  
A hard night – cold and windy –  
didn't get much sleep. Trying to keep  
warm, could you spare a cigarette?”

Stripped of pretense he stands and waits.

Look through him, turn away, shake  
your head, offer wine mingled with gall.  
No time, no needs you can fill,  
such claims on what you lack.

Take his cloak and cast lots  
for his humanity. Toss  
scraps from your trash. Mock  
him to mask your own shame.

## *Station XIII: Pieta*

Michelangelo Buonarroti's *Pieta*, at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome

I remember well the night  
Joseph laid you in my arms.  
He tore my cloak in strips  
to staunch my blood and clean  
you, then wrapped his own cloak  
round us. Your perfect mouth  
opened for my first milk:  
God's life in my hands.

Kings with gifts seduced us,  
but Joseph scented treason.  
We fled to Egypt, then slipped  
down to Nazareth by night.

They lay you in my arms.  
I tear my cloak in strips  
to staunch your blood, my love,  
to clean your wounds.

ICONS

*Jonah, ben Amittai*

(Dove, son of Truth)

Arise, go to Nineveh, the great  
city. Call to her, for her evil  
comes before my face and I burn;  
not long before she overturns.

Seek another mouth, a novice  
to violence. Let me die  
decently in bed, deaf to pious  
frauds who invent remorse to bribe  
you. I sail west to Tarshish.

And the ship thought to break up.

Arise, go to Nineveh, and call  
to her my calling. Within her walls  
are children and many animals.

## *Ariadne*

Countless caterpillars  
strip our land. Birdsong  
drains from hills; crickets  
roast in dirt, their limbs  
beat a mute tattoo threading  
tracks among nude trees.

Innumerable paths  
of deception lure us  
away. Lost a thousand  
nights in the desert we  
see but cannot reach love  
slanting through labyrinths  
as doves spiral in fog  
to flock for the day star.

## *Daphne*

Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*, at the Galleria Borghese in Rome

lapis  
eyes flecked and veined with gold  
*vibrato*  
hand melts morning lips  
imagine marble

sunlight  
greening oranda's tail  
siesta  
wakes to coffee laced  
with cardamom

midnight  
bitter stars blink code  
swift sleep  
among clouds of cream  
steamed for chocolate

## *Eurydice*

Immaterial: brittle  
star, once haloed, absent  
from its constellation  
lost in a fit of translation.

Immaterial: a soul,  
her frayed phalanges tapping time  
as storks clap bill to bill in code  
and lighthouse mimics salvation.

Immaterial: illusion;  
pearl by oblate pearl  
mud-crowned and olive-rooted  
her necklace of tears comes unstrung.

## *Harmonia*

First practice:  
each voice uniform  
escorts in turn while extras move  
above, below, pause to check  
their vision in the mirror,  
delay a beat or three  
the melody.

As piecemeal,  
each original  
inherits immortality,  
clasps a ring of fire round her neck:  
its filigree a ruse, inflected  
to cadence clean  
with her receptor.

## *Tyche*

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's *Narcissus*, at the Galleria Borghese in Rome

Eyes averted denying  
denial still the newsreel  
loops a moebius strip

a phantom plane capsized and fell  
in flames to spoil our garden  
that summer night of concord

rising at twilight – snail  
on the horizon – its trail  
of spun sugar flared

out in the dying dusk  
to shriek down the air  
and rip through the almond grove

you stood apart watching  
the waterfall your ears tuned  
to crickets declining ruin

*Elizabeth/ אלישבע*

Then I missed you in the market  
and knelt to seek among the citrus  
for winter fruit to mark your mouth  
crimson (star ruby, cara, blood

orange; pomegranates all  
with a certain charm). Amber  
lily, lily, rose: who will kiss  
the hunger from your ears? Hyssop

lily, lily, rose: who will press  
the lemon in your hand? *Za'tar*  
lily, lily, rose: who will pluck  
you from the tree of his betrayal,

laden with new life and sweeter  
far than honey in the comb?

## *Maryam*

Ya! Maryam; ya! umm Allah. (Palestinian Christmas Carol)

Hey, Mary; hey, God's mother.

Did you know your child would ride  
to his death in Jerusalem  
on a donkey, like the friend  
who carried you, urging him  
into birth at Bethlehem?

Hey, Mary; hey, God's mother.

Did you charge Joseph to trust  
his dream, to stand by your side  
and steal you away to *Misrayim*  
that night milk mingled with blood  
and Rachel demanded your head?

Hey, Mary; hey, God's mother.

Did you school Christ in love's cost,  
wrapped in his father's *kaffiyeh*  
and sleepily kissing your breast,  
while you caressed each finger  
and toe, as if numbering stars?

Hey, Mary; hey, God's mother.

## *Anna*

This dying *minyán* pleads day  
by day for a sign: show us  
God, *nevi* Anna. For all

I see I might be *Yonah*,  
caught in that fish gut, eyes  
cloudy from regret. Men, like

trees davening in a storm,  
I say, grisaille alphabet  
*Yod hay*, on the scroll, *vav hay*.

From the chiaroscuro  
Simeon speaks: 'and a blade  
will pierce your heart with its truth'.

All the bright fragments of light  
*Adonai* cast at the sky  
gather into this girl, child

with a child in her arms. A star  
of wonder overturns us,  
we who wait on the holy

here where moral pygmies stir  
up fans of mortal bliss, preaching  
beauty without righteousness.

## *Magdalena*

At nightfall, when the ram beats  
head against stone, I would wait  
inside the wall, there by its narrow  
gate, those wooden bars no match  
for wolf or warrior, bells hung  
in almond trees to lure the lambs home.

I've heard his cedar boat bump shore  
and, furtive as dawn as she sails  
across Galilee, hid my pails  
of milk, ah sweetly crusted  
in golden cream, so to hoist  
up trammel nets of leaping perch.

Call me a motherless child:  
not as my sisters, whose sightless  
men and toothless babes defend  
their honor. I was in free  
fall, loose in the land, possessed  
of myself and my demons.

Until you caught in your hand  
my gaze and I dove to rest,  
here where a sword pierced my vacant  
breast. Let your heart beat then, hot  
and slow. They say you know all  
I've felt and been; may it be so.

*Simon Peter/Judas Iscariot*

Your days of delusion done;  
that cloud you lived and breathed in:  
unnatural. A one trick  
peacock you danced while backstage,  
at the false apostle's charge,  
acolytes cranked their machine  
and mindful evil's glamour  
drew you into his orbit.

Lost, in the clamor of greed's  
need, the foghorn's *angelus*  
and the descant of her voice.

No operatic end, no  
blaze of light or fallen horse  
for you, bound by earth's tether.

## *The Beloved Disciple*

As fledglings sing aubade  
the wounded surgeon, dove  
in her columbarium,  
packs powder down in the gap  
and, frayed edge of flesh clipped clean,  
threads strand in shaft to suture  
her heart, a pouch embroidered  
of French knots. Until the scars  
arise, each breeze chafes her loss  
tearing its seal of *saudade*.

CARICATURES

## *Natural Law*

### **I – Parthenogenesis**

Druze believe a man conceives  
and bears Messiah: blushed with morning  
sun he wheels in courtship dance, then  
from his jewel box into pouched pants  
deposits eggs, unfertilized; tail  
uncurled to tail and womb cradling fry,  
in travesty of virgin birth.

### **II – Eschatology**

Adrift in isolation from child  
and mate, man constructs his vision:  
cadenced tail coral anchored, and cold  
in hand and heart; inoculated  
against wisdom by Nike's poisoned  
arrow, petal by petal unfolds  
a wound that only death will heal.

## *Rules of Engagement*

Lift the veil from the door of prayer,  
and slip into wisdom's armor;  
for your sword take up the mercy  
of doves. Innocents can escape  
the prison of their prospects:  
while herons are spearing prey,  
a pelican roots for hindmilk.

Cast a wide net sorting by words  
let treachery sing in your heart;  
then crave a rapture of decay  
where button eyes and appliqué  
smile behold bliss. Begin again.  
Here mockers slay the genuine  
and malice is its own reward.

## *Virtue Ethics*

Slow indigo stain clots a sea  
devoid of stars where, rudderless,  
free riders on a house of prayer  
scull, ravenous for the first fruits  
of war. Charmed by a hidden  
deceit, their prow splits truth from trust  
to court that unsound god, *trompe-l'œil*.

*A Dios misericordia;*  
loose the anchor of last resort;  
we wayfarers provoke their vice.  
Containing all that is, within,  
we are collateral damage.  
Let cuckoo soul wed peacock brain.  
There shall be a second setting sail.

## *Anamnesis*

Sitting at my corner desk, alone,  
I watch him comb his moustache with a thin  
forefinger,  
while speaking softly to my telephone,  
whose curved white hull he tucked between his chin  
and shoulder.

The spinnaker fell as a lone sailor  
led his boat leeward in a *tour jete*  
through the harbor.  
Just so, gown wind blown in the night, Juliet  
paused at the tomb to pirouette  
above her lover.

I replay twilight in your art deco  
cafe on the marina. Accompanied  
by the office drone  
I take a call, then hear your voice recede  
on ocean waves as I breathe the echo  
of your cologne.

## *Dress Rehearsal*

Palm flat against the bare white wall, she danced  
deftly foot to toe, while shadows cast  
wrinkles on her hands.

She licked tequila, salt and lime.  
With her fingertip rubbing the rim  
of the glass she kept time

to the traffic. The bottle drained, her finger  
erased the salt tang from her mouth. Later,  
hand curved beneath her  
face, she bit her palm until it stained  
red. At midnight she ran through the rain,  
tearing frost-veined

maple leaf lobes from their bloody stems.  
Fragments drifting past her danced on the wind.  
Clothed in ocean waves,  
a luminous sea star her maid, she gave  
her unlocked mouth to the sand shifting  
against her wet skin.

## *Self-Resurrection*

Death was a rude awakening.

She thought, at the end, to fall  
asleep, nestled in the arms of God  
who, tearing a strip from His shroud,  
would dry every tear in her eye.

She pictured mother, arms spread  
wide to offer cake, while she deigned  
to forgive her fellow dead:  
Such sacrifice befitting God.

Instead, at her right swells a cloud  
of living witnesses. Pawns  
in her dream match – lover, colleague  
friend – uncover wounds, gangrenous.

To her left, sycophants. Artists  
preying on her secret fault fade  
as chaff on brittle wind. Their mute  
cries melt: ‘Welcome, Lady

Lazarus, into ceaseless light’.