

she's dragged before the prince. His hands are locked
in prayer. Why bother? She is beautiful and the prince has ass's ears.
Last, late, and hardly interesting at all
is Veritas. I stare at her
as awed as Satan at the face of Eve.

APPEAL TO THE WHIRLWIND

Give me the gifts: love, hope, and treachery—
these three. But treachery has the great claim: complication.
Formal and elaborate, aching to be

slapped down, it opens doors in asphalt, makes something
out of nothing—out of nothing at all.
In blank unpredatory sky it sees a goshawk blurred

in the radical of its descent. The point at which it strikes meat
is Archimedean. Done poorly, treachery can budge the world. I want
to do it well. I want to be the missionary who refuses,

point blank, to mention grace to natives—even
when they ask. He won't be drawn out. He lets their souls
—the souls of headhunters and cannibals!—languish

and find their own way to perdition. When they press him,
he puts his finger in his mouth and cocks his thumb.
That too is a lie. Treachery is taut between the world and us

and it is useful in the prevention of disease. It drops us down
into risk, down into percentages and decimal points. It denies death
and makes our lives worthwhile. I told a friend, *The moon*

*is only part of it. Once we get evening hacked away
the whole night sky will look like that.* She didn't buy a word I said
but still she held my hand between her knees as we drove

into a plum-colored dusk too beautiful to see. We skipped joy
and went right to the crying, the gnashing of teeth. We were very
good at it. We will improve. I trust the suffering—

like bone in flesh, it will endure. Still, what I said
about the moon is something I believe. A gift
the liar gives himself, like carelessness or truth.