

of apple pie, a black chrysanthemum, a job—I could go on.
I am ashamed when I remember whom I have attacked
with actuality. My mother with her cheapness. My wife

with black and purple dress—you should have seen it!—
and her infidelities. My friend who steals ashtrays. My brother's
avoirdupois. I repent that blade and I repent

my skill with it. When blessed with falsehoods, I will tell them.
When told a lie, I will believe it. I will not doubt
a word you say. Forgive me now my finger in the wound, and
knuckle deep.

JUDAS, FLOWERING

Everybody has a hero. He is mine. Who would I be
if I hadn't polished evil, like a pair of shoes
and walked across my life in them? And though
I've long since worn the bottoms through, the tops
are bright as bulbs. They light my path. Without them I would be
barred

from restaurants. But, Judas, do I have to be quite
so human in my brilliant shoes? I'm not complaining. Lies are
enough.

They are the grease that slips a camel through
the needle's eye. He doesn't even have to touch the sides
unless I say he does. Thank you. And lies
are just a start. The world is rich
with penny-ante lies and frugal sins. Since I am wrong
I want to do it right. Or wrong. I confuse myself.
I want to be spectacularly wrong
so I may, in the crowd, be noticed, lifted out, preserved,
redeemed. I need the big betrayal, the perfidy
that Botticelli knew but didn't understand. In *Calumny*
a prince has protracted, pointed, velvet donkey ears, and to those ears
—those gorgeous ass's ears!—cling Ignorance
and Suspicion. They love those wonderful ears! And there is
Calumny,
her fingers laced into the hair of a man

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