

Ssh · *Albert Goldbarth*

I know: your pain, its having rooted
in. Well even now, on a small
Sicilian farm, they're shoeing the chickens
together into a fecal-smudged, ruffled clump.
They're not much but I give them to you,
prescriptive. I give you a brush dipped
thick in its black ink, like a child
falling asleep one summer afternoon,
his head dipped into the black
China skies. I give a dream
brushed heavy in black ink: coal,
obsidian, crows on a wire,
notes of jazz on the line. It's
night in China. I know: your pain.
It's bright out: the chickens are
shaking off great chunks of light,
like retrievers out of a pond, but
even so: they're finally secreted
in wicker baskets and blanketed over
with odd scraps from the sewing bin.
Even the wind, that rummaging
hand in the green till, is hushed in its
olive boughs. I give you the darkness the
pit knows, in the meat, in the oils,
the dark that's the home of the seed.
I give you the rabbi's cap, the nun's
jet wimple, the pocks on the dice,
no matter the sun: I give you the black
of a panther, of the retina
the panther courses and
disappears into, the retina
behind its lid, the black of the awning
closed and the city in silence. Now
they've lowered those baskets,

by noon, down the dry well. Those
chickens will never call the sharp
attention of the king's men
to this town. It's okay now. They're
passing right by, with their lances.
They're passing right by this
stone throat of sleep at mid-day.
I give you that sleep. I blanket you over.
No matter the sun. I know: such pain.
It's passing right by. Your feather pillow.