

BETRAYING THE MUSE

1.

Always this half-light Old Ghost
As if a sheer curtain has blown down
Or a veneer of dust overlays the glass

One can still see and through to the other side
The hooded crow scavenges the hillside groves
Late heat shimmers off the roof tiles

If the rehearsed lines have been spoken
They cling like attar in the air
The spent iris dissolves and drips its ink

The sky tarnishes silver and olive
The silver of olive a silver
Like the thumb-smudge inside a mussel shell

Always this half-light to demarcate the rift
The precious the semi-precious the base
All beyond alchemy beyond change

2.

Green on the ruddled roadside scree a lizard
Slips out of the recesses out and over
The tumbled grotto of debris out of sight

If the lesser kestrel passes like a shuttle
Between the umbrella pine and cypress
Between the stone barn and old city wall

Words will not unravel the fabric of its hunt
How does one distinguish between
A gift's burden and its intractable boon

Between fidelity and infidelity
Are words neither passage nor province
I will try Old Ghost try for once to stay quiet

To let the lost stay lost between static and rust
And not hoist the moon up not count on its dim
Chalk-drawn cast to reveal all you withhold

3.

Now half the fence is a screen of heart-shaped leaves
The vine finds another iron spear and coils
Should I take as sign or admonition

Its blind reaching out the way unchecked
It can take over an entire garden
Thrive and spoil as is the wont of things

The glut of silt and muck along the riverbank
Is a fester and ferment of mosquitoes
You Old Ghost you are the quiet one

And though you place a flock of starlings
In a tree at dusk a dark engine at work
Fueled by disquiet by agitation

You have not a single word to offer
Only your window overlooking is shuttered
How in a dumbshow does silence rebuke