Eulene's Noche Oscura Carolyne Wright

When Eulene walked in, habits turned the color of strangle-vines. Nuns scrubbed the chapel on their knees, the wrathful afternoon glowering through stained glass, choirstalls halved by Manichaean shadow.

Now,

Eulene sneaks out during Evening Prayer to work on her icon of Big Nun—fishwife in a chain-gang rosary and goat's-hair veil, her Popeye forearms tattoed with the Pontiff's face.

Eulene hums snatches of the Vatican Rag and the house gets narrower.

Who else would laugh at the prioress's black tabby with white paws and monsignor collar, or christen it *Magnificat* at the vestry water cooler? All night it yowls from the dead hemlock in the convent close, Eulene's cri-de-coeur's semblable.

What is she after?
She's weary of tinsel stars,
names in neon aureoles
breakdancing on the big marquees.
Through "Religious Preference"
she still draws a line
straight as a brain-scan.

In Sunday School she learned Sign of the Cross as Theatre. Later, she wore earplugs against the sound of one hand clapping, deprogrammers her parents hired hot on her trail.

These days, she answers their calls in Dracula's Daughter's voice: "Sacre Bleu Convent, Stigmata Vile You Vait."

She's good at shrinking herself to fit disappointment. When she hears the prioress's boots on the stairs she dumps her crayons in the potted plants, drops Big Nun into the frame behind the Founding Mother's portrait.

She stands up to collect her dogface. When she looks down, a stanger's shadow glides from underneath her shoes.