

ST. FRANCIS AND THE HAWK

A shark's eye among leaves, that won't
come like others come: sparrow hawk.
I spit in my hand for you to drink. I butt
my face against the tree. Other birds flock
at my breast with their curse-driven wings
as the Lord insists. You are impudent, starving.
I tear off my nail; my bald finger sings
its blood and should tempt you. The villagers are lying;
I'm not a man, so how can I live among men?
The stink of public loneliness drives me mad
with its dreams of cock and dung. Come, descend
to my crown and pick from my scalp your food.
Pick away at the brain, this last wealth of men
until my mind is as empty as my God's again.

UNREPENTANT WITCH BURNED FOR ADULTERY IN 1503

In the face of happiness. I spit in the face of happiness.
They want the truth. I give it to them like a cup of air.
Singing for my life, I sang their lie, that crackle and hiss,
that pardon from the paradise of flesh, but it did no good.
They'll have me dead. Circling me, they take off their hats.
A small child carries the torch and lights the sticks.
I can smell the slippers begin to burn on my feet.
In my head your breast, glazed with sweat, meets
my breast. The light curls like a silkworm in your hair.
Where are the rains He promised us, to drench us, to rot
the caps from our knees? No. I won't repent by His law.
Your kiss is a leaf that falls from high up: I must catch it.
Your tongue is so plump with blood, so cold it covers
my skin with frost as the fire, like a scissors, opens my dress.