

Sonnet: Introduction

I must have had a mother. I must have had
a hat, and then given it away, upside down,
so that someone would be compelled
to fill their head with crocuses. I must
have seen how golden the moon
appears to a virgin of Demeter, wreathed
in glowing wheat, betrothed to dirt. I come
from a village accessible only by boat; you can see
how the heat clings to me, how from my ankles
dangle netted glass, blue lobsters, pieces of kindling,
four tamed crickets ready for circus life.
Sweet hedge maze, verdant under every planet,
I will show you what the center is made for.
Here is my hat. Something has to change.

The Age of Prophets

is over again. You spread time

over your own wingspan, then file off

the end of your longest finger's fingernail to show
how briefly our bodies have lived. Mostly amoebas through

the arms, the torso, an unremarked stirring

near the wrist. The first giraffe to dare for an upper leaf,

warm eyes slipping into phalanx
formation or surrounding the skull

like sentries. Meteors brush by us as in a crowded bar,

skin on skin as far apart as reams of empty space, casting off
the same dust and ice I'm told we're made of. What luck:

to meet now, in a land of occasional cleanliness

and safety, as when the audience, emerging
from the dark cinema, stops to watch

a single monarch butterfly zag across the street.

No one knows if it's real, or if it's one that just pretends.

The Source of the Nile

Before the voyage I left a houseplant
just for a time but the seeds tipped out
and now among the Ginny leaves
sprout the tenderest most anonymous grass by mistake

you have to get to the root
and I don't know where that formula begins

some wind-caressed breadbasket of the Mediterranean
or north among the furred and busy lichen

before the Messiah was even a twinkle
in the galaxy's sucking emptiness

before the translation of nothing and now

that the houseplant is in my white stone house
the grass reaches, unnamed, to the potted banana
palm in the yard which is lonely

as the Nile on Mars

The More I Give, the Hungrier They Get

Great silos of seed that, if planted,
would cover the earth end to end, would grow

in the places savaged by fire, mud-drowned,
blasted with an age-old atomic thrum.

The seeds are tumbled ruins on the beach,
drops of magma frozen to a high sheen.

My slippers are smooth as doves. At the window,
the agate eyes of the cat twitching with murder.

The faces of this earth are terrible: a pear
orchard, the desperate mountain clouds,
the tropic undergrowth of treacherous green.

The birds here are brown and gray, though
their thoughts are of what the moon does

after it leaves the tide to its muttering foam.