

III

AND SOME BEGAN TO SPIT ON HIM AND TO COVER HIS FACE

καὶ ἤρξαντό τινες ἐμπτύειν αὐτῷ καὶ περικαλύπτειν αὐτοῦ τὸ πρόσωπον
(Mark 14.65)

when I stand before the gleaming rail
polished beyond smudge of fingerprint
the words for the things spill out
and fill the scented air between that cup
and these lips

unclean lips

and blasphemy they cry blasphemy
and on the altar no coals no tongs no seraphs no holyholyholy

blasphemy they cry blasphemy
heart calloused ears dull

blasphemy they cry blasphemy
stumps of terebinth and oak

blasphemy they cry blasphemy
and they tear the alb the stole the mitre, bend
the crozier, rip off their broad phylacteries
and underneath, foreheads
leprous as Uzziah's

blasphemy they cry blasphemy
and snatching the purple cloth from the
shrouded crucifix
they cover my face before the altar of the LORD
they strip you naked to hide the shame of me

lest I prophesy again

who hit me?

who hit me?

so the holy seed will be the stump in the land

περικαλύπτειν: to cover up