

### 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