

## OSHIBANA

i

Look at me.  
From my rag cloth they cut status symbol samples  
that they wore on flag post chests as totems.  
Daubed their faces with my tar.  
There was a star above my head, five pointed,  
bleak, and in my blood rough corals.  
Life sang my dubious assets, a monstrosity  
of want, wild custom, forced conformance.  
My eyes bled milk and honey.  
My nipples fed.

Watch me draw comfort from the flies  
that curious, roam my lap where children loved to lollop,  
moving, restless, in exactly the same manner.  
They do their bit of service while I, dejected, cipher.

Pick up this voice in the wilderness  
sharpened by pain, hoarsened by sorrow,  
its innocent sleep of exhaustion revoked,  
not forced, conducive.  
Mine, the corpse buried alive in this tomb of a finistère,  
the echo of a song, the interference.  
Fitness plays no part in my survival,  
water and luck indebt me,  
rescuing, unheeding, from the fury of mankind.  
Stray prey the lions left behind.  
Unkind...unkind.

ii

Rid me of the memories.  
Horrid nightmares of tribal hounds  
rounding, like dogs, the lepers of mankind.  
The fleas.  
Up their burning barrels  
hopes were dashed at their point of origin,  
contempt forcibly palling, not knowing any better.

It was so quick,  
a swung scythe across the grain,  
the lives lying limp as textile.  
From their clean sweep ochre rivers grew,  
thick and slimy, tainting and sinister as sin,  
their course cut short by clotting.

Febrile, the equator sun shed tears of decay  
the vultures gathered swiftly in urns of scissored beaks  
tearing, devouring,  
glorying in their own vilification.  
To me they left the dross: pain, loss and desolation.

Lend me the purge of forgiveness  
to clean me of revenge.  
I am what fate has made me:  
the bruise after the slap, the decimation.  
Uprooted shrub predator man mishandled,  
wrestling with balance,  
the tilt striving to wedge with salvaged pride.  
Bud turned rosehip, no flowering in between.

Inside me, my sap is oshibana.  
There is no space that avid joy may covet,  
black sorrow fills it all.  
Experience drained it.  
But there is will that claims it.

My eyes scan the horizon.  
They do not see.  
They stare.  
Seafarer out of pledge, I dare.  
Follow my star to the west.  
Of these losses choose "the best":  
another spring's regrowth, new bud allowed to flower.  
They say there are rights there...  
If they don't fizzle out, mere bubbles,  
before the landing hour...