Appeal to the Whirlwind

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3103
she’s dragged before the prince. His hands are locked in prayer. Why bother? She is beautiful and the prince has ass’s ears. Last, late, and hardly interesting at all is Veritas. I stare at her as awed as Satan at the face of Eve.

APPEAL TO THE WHIRLWIND

Give me the gifts: love, hope, and treachery—these three. But treachery has the great claim: complication. Formal and elaborate, aching to be slapped down, it opens doors in asphalt, makes something out of nothing—out of nothing at all. In blank unpredatory sky it sees a goshawk blurred in the radical of its descent. The point at which it strikes meat is Archimedean. Done poorly, treachery can budge the world. I want to do it well. I want to be the missionary who refuses, point blank, to mention grace to natives—even when they ask. He won’t be drawn out. He lets their souls—the souls of headhunters and cannibals!—languish and find their own way to perdition. When they press him, he puts his finger in his mouth and cocks his thumb. That too is a lie. Treachery is taut between the world and us and it is useful in the prevention of disease. It drops us down into risk, down into percentages and decimal points. It denies death and makes our lives worthwhile. I told a friend, The moon is only part of it. Once we get evening hacked away the whole night sky will look like that. She didn’t buy a word I said but still she held my hand between her knees as we drove
into a plum-colored dusk too beautiful to see. We skipped joy and went right to the crying, the gnashing of teeth. We were very good at it. We will improve. I trust the suffering—

like bone in flesh, it will endure. Still, what I said about the moon is something I believe. A gift the liar gives himself, like carelessness or truth.