

Bird of Paradise Aubade With Bangkok Etching Over the Bed

Woke to hear you refuse
to stop working in heavy rain, shoveling the mud
that beggars our part
of the yard. After a while, I heard the rasp of iron's
rake on gravel, wet earth, your bending for the gaps
to get the seedlings right. Then for hours from the window

I watched all your muscles connecting up, your body's parse
of sweat and salt, hollows
between the ribs appearing, then not, around your
breath's steady reed and thrum. Watched,
you see, until I knew, for once, I wouldn't try to leave.
Though I did want to walk out and say something else

about moving through the myth
of ask and answer once. I wanted to tell you how I saw it spill
out on sidewalk, alleyway, underpass, and how traveling
that way, in another country,
I had to love the hawkers' come ons,
their peddling, every night, the Leda and swan-style

tracings. On our wall now, I can make out her limbs
misted in chalk blear, the thighs streaked, but still skirting his will.
And when you come in I want to show you
the half man, half bird, the one whose mouth
hangs open, his little razor-cut hungering of how much
he wants her. Or have you see how a span

of white rivers between
them, the distance of missing they wed again
and again. The chalk drifts through
the design. Outside, a real bird's rapid trill in flight
skirts the window frame. And now you're stepping over
the lawn's dropped

branches, carrying the tallest stalks still hung with weeds.
Getting there, you say, giving me the ones almost in bloom.
After you turn away
I put the buds to my mouth
to taste the skin before it breaks open, the bodies, newly green,
bound to root-pact, stem-line, moments before they fall.