

## ORCHID MANTIS

I understand what it is to be swayed  
by the immediate beauty, the easy  
metaphor, the tulip's conservative  
skirts so decorously posed, or the orchid's  
flared face. But naivety never serves me.  
Always, I reach for some velvet curtain  
string or an unstitched seam I can pull  
to unravel perfection. I admit beautiful  
men terrify me. Beautiful women  
with black lashes long enough to dust  
their high-cut cheekbones also terrify  
but, statistically, seem less deadly. Forget  
glamorous criers with sparkling eyes  
soaked in witch hazel and boric acid.  
I prefer ugly emotions. Sobs stacked  
like bricks on the wailer's shoulders.  
Throw in a silver cap gleaming  
from an incisor, a bedazzled  
eye patch, or the dead man's curve  
of a twice-broken nose. I love most  
those who risk their nakedness:  
vener strippers, who question  
or curb their appetites; who see  
but refuse to be seized by this  
carnivorous pursuit of beauty.