

**Mask**

*For Joshua Julian Barnes 1972-1991*

My eyes are the paths comets take  
and are always asleep, always awake,  
watching the cattle and sheep that hide  
in the forest of my hair  
beneath the diadem of plumes and tongues,  
flowers and horns. The animals flee  
towards the shore of my face  
where spirals flex then curl,  
curl then flex  
along the glittering bracelet of death.

On the beaked cliff whispering masters  
create clay altars, celebrate the spring.  
Their cattle and sheep gallop  
into the ocean of my mouth,  
where the sun drowns  
and weapons rest.

*Janis Rapoport*