

LA PLAGÉ, TANGER

The sun's final spark, innumerately chopped
upon the water, spits at the eye
until the scrolled vision seeks the lap of hills
rescued green after the long smite of summer.

Daily at sunset they quit the bothered streets
and like a broken current of trick klansmen
slip a mile along the coast to where the sea
curls its noise in the whisper of bamboo,
there to fetch from the sleeve good grams and pipes.

The day's keen dalliance drops back;
these few men, severally instinct, slide by
the Yacht Club de Tanger and empty English tea bars;
private now, they trade only shadow
with the whalish bulks of four fishing barks
beached high, a black bite at the sun's fall.

The Lisbon ferry wedges the horizon
and in seconds tips its growth to port.
A minutes folding over the bay's corrugations
and the discord of her wake smacks ashore,
shaking the tide of its duskluscent oils.
An express scrapes its junk along the front;
a plane moans overhead towards Spain.

The flourish of transport seeps to extinguishment.
Their hour's ground now gained, each man prepares.
A bundle on the shore voids his gut, retreats
and squats isosceles to smoke. Sahara's proximate acre
burns to the south, it dares the sun's lapse
to one last enragement of the finished sky.
The tiny freight of each pipe is touched off:
a rash of ease infects the night.

—Nigel Jenkins