

## “Mask Making”

Broken screen-cicadas drill through  
the gauzy scent of orange blossoms  
heavy over the grove.

One gangly mantis  
clammers out of the queen's wrath, kneels  
over a jewel-backed beetle.

I lie back  
on bare tile, my hair  
swaddled in threadbare folds  
of old towels.

The maker  
coats my face with a thin clear smear  
of Vaseline, cuts strips of  
powdered bandage to bridge  
chin, brows, lips, nose-dips  
into cool water. His fingers strip  
white drops from each patch, then tuck  
my face in- length by length, a cool  
sodden cover close your eyes now  
his touch assured, reverent,  
stay very still until

in the quick desert air  
my face lightens, tighter now  
and hard. He touches  
each crucial place, then lifts  
from my cheekbones  
another unfinished form

ready for gesso, acrylics,  
black feather, bone.