LA PLAGE, 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 enrageament of the finished sky. The tiny freight of each pipe is touched off: a rash of ease infects the night.

—Nigel Jenkins