

FRANCIS BLESSINGTON

Leather and Bell

From the branch the longwing drop-
flies, as from a catapult,
fans and lands
gentle on my hand.

Milord's too was buckskinned,
the proffered left where you rode trained
and braced to rake
the quail's breast and mask.

You sight the mouse switch of grass
at a furlong, and bate and toss
—till I wheel my lure
and, like a longbow arrow, you stake the fur.

Mantling your prey,
you hold hawks and falconer at bay
to hatchet
the stuffed rabbit's foot.

My monstrance, the raised glove,
pries you from your love,
the bite of beef
I palm unfriended for your romance of meat.

Time-tourists, we rent your mews,
and your wildness dies, since we chose
to track and trace
our consciousness to Doomsday.

But—still unhooded by hate or God's gratitude, princess of kills,
unjessed by hand or bell—
you shatter the sky—
beautified, by half-tamed centuries.