

## Doña Maria

Doña Maria lives on in a painting. When she died  
She left behind a curl of cigar smoke, a puff of perfume  
That smells of lying down at night-time in a flowerbed of iris  
As the morning dew washes over her violet body.  
A dusting of wig-powder, a fig on a silver platter,  
Emeralds as big as brussels sprouts studding her bony fingers,  
And a velvet ribbon plucked from her breast,  
A gilt miniature which splits into eight  
Revealing the faces of her illegitimate children.

Doña Maria spiritually relates to oysters.  
She too has been plucked from the seabed,  
Stolen from a little backwater. Her husband the kidnapper  
Was known to irritate her insides of an evening,  
Particularly after taking too much wine with his supper.  
So she had formed eight pearls, eight curly-haired children,  
As a natural defence against her husband the irritant.

Doña Maria's eyes are candied nuts, dried by their own salted tears.  
Her coiffure is mounted like a coil of secrets,  
And wild asparagus grows from her headpiece.  
The painter daubs without understanding his subject,  
Who looks at him from beneath dark eyebrows.  
He is forced to add red paint to her cheeks  
To feign the curling blush of femininity. For Doña Maria  
Looks at him without timidity. She is not the governor's wife,  
She is the governor. Her dress of palest silk  
Is just a clever ruse, a costume to soften her brilliant edges,  
To shine a dim boudoir light on her intrepid spirit.