

Eating Songbirds

To my love, to my perfect sorrow:

Each evening with you is a feast of ortolan buntings

— little jeweled songbirds: snatched from the wing
as they fly towards the perfumed breezes of the sea,
Held captive in a lightless box, fattened for slaughter,
Drowned in liquor, roasted and plucked and served
Whole on silver —

Eaten in the manner of a Roman emperor
Or a French aristocrat,
Eaten in a back room, out of view of the
Lawmakers who for perfectly good reasons
Forbid the irresistible;

A meal eaten beneath a shroud,
The palliative effect of which both conceals the
Shame and cruelty of the act and heightens its zest.

Each exquisite bite is every day we spend together:

Mouths torn apart by shards of songbirds' bones,
Blood mingling with the gamy savour of the berry-fed
Bird — a moment of coveted, lusted-for delectability,
Entirely inseparable from the agony of the act of eating.