

*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.