

GOLD AND PURPLE

On Sundays
They made us wear white
So that I
And the boy on my right
Could carry the candles
To the altar
Where a man wore gold and purple
And he burnt incense
Before serving the bread
And wine

On Saturdays
He only wore black
While listening to our confessions
Of adolescence
I might have mentioned - just the once
That someone used to touch me
Privately like some unfinished canvas
So that day
I was instructed to say
Hail Mary

Twenty times extra
As my penance
I still remember
My mother waiting patiently
Curiously watching
How I once prayed on my knees
At the altar
For fifteen minutes longer
Since then

GOLD AND PURPLE

I made sure that I would only confess sins

To no more than the equivalent
Of three Hail Marys
And one Lord's Prayer
So that on Sundays
I could wear white
With the beautiful boy on my right
We used to carry the candles
To the altar
For a man who wore gold and purple