

Balm (excerpt)

by T.A. Noonan

I. Ishtar



oil warms

one month of radiation

crowns shine by moonlight

& a crescent-shaped scar

crosslight

where my daughter's hand comes back

the initiate dresses herself

IV. Inanna



my second language

to silence

plainsong of

the breast

wind over reeds

the mother sings

stirring honey

X. Aphrodite



clad in little trees

steel slipped beneath linen

& skin

her ankle a forest of kisses
healer's hands

her breath on my ear
shaping the sign for remission
the cure for winter

XV. Kali

* * *

cut here & see
cut here & see
how much woman can live
how black my skin with blood

inside half a woman
who stands on another's back

XVIII. Demeter

* * *

& what of my daughter
who seeks me in a field
unsure of her own skin

one eye cast back
to a clump of daisies
fingers searching the dark pulp for pits

XIX. Parvati

* * *

tilt your face toward mine

this is a woman's jaw

it cannot be held open by force

remember you are annoited by queens

remember you are your mother's voice

this is the last place we will speak so freely

when the breads left altarside stale, we shall forget
our tongues

XXV. Lilith

* * *

slice an apple sideways to reveal the star
a cherry-blossom space

my husband believed the pale inner fruit
should stay pale outer color an estimation
how sugar could burst in his mouth like a supernova

my secret
what browns so quick is what surrounds
nothing fades when nothing is there

XXVI. Shekhinah

* * *

no pink in a tiger's eye
flash of asbestos rainbow
each iris spark a layer of pressure

speaking what the mouth cannot

born dark & poisonous
still I rise in shimmers

