

1986

## Poems

Antigone Kefala

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## Poems

### Abstract

Family history, Rites, The bell

# Antigone Kefala

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## FAMILY HISTORY

Satin in Mother's room,  
mirrors, alabaster boxes,  
Black Sea shells, water singing,  
I went around the bed chanting:  
Do you hear the sea inside me?  
Stopped at the new cot  
oyster head, crayfish tail,  
as in the zoology books,  
I picked it up and swallowed it,  
horrified,  
yet the thing had no taste.

When I found myself I was weeping,  
beating the ground with my fists,  
the wet nurses were there,  
all in grey, and his face  
with the dark handsome eyes  
slipped away from my reach.

## RITES

They moved towards the killing  
in an underwater dusk  
the sunken garden full of shadows.  
I went unwillingly  
kept looking at the ground  
their sandled feet on the wet stones

the palm leaves they were holding  
in their hands to mark the chanting.

The silence struck  
as they approached the chamber.  
Past the white portals, only  
the body petrified in ash  
lay in the light,  
arrested in the moment of  
the fall, beyond release.

On the stone benches I waited  
with the others. Were there  
palm leaves, or horses' manes  
that glinted in the dark?  
The black fox watched me from  
her lap, lithe, a sea serpent  
with enamelled eyes.

## THE BELL

Soundless  
you ring  
on the great waves  
in afternoons  
full of cicadas.

Your breath  
dusts slightly  
the polish of  
their wooden vestments  
waiting  
so small  
so self contained  
before the altars.