

He took the sword and muleta for a pase de la muerte,

Began the last act, the faena, *wait*

Wind snatched the cardinal cloth, exposed his hiding.

But this toro promised greatness. Waited. Shared.

Santos designed a new pass. ~~Then~~ ~~Next the naturals~~, slow ballet

Of cerise wing, silver pivot, brown muscle,

Turning, ~~winding~~. The wind held its breath, (gasped) puffed

Short gusts between ~~each series~~. Again

Santos heard his name. The beast smeared by,

Redding his spangles, honing his senses on horn,

Stench, bone-rattling sideswipe.

And the bovine voice of another avenger.

Seven years of bulls only Santos spoke,

His fluent muleta commanding the charges, punishing

The pale-hearted, persuading the valiant ones of their chances

To paint their points. <sup>at length</sup> ~~Then~~ ~~telling them when to bow their heads~~  
for the offering, the ritual communion.

~~And offer the spot for benediction.~~

Veronicas ago Santos would have laughed. Or branded it

A trick of weariness or aire. Did Miguel's bull

Call his name? Does the final Toro tell <sup>the</sup> Torero?

He spat dust out of his mouth. He must not

Succumb to overawe. This was the toro de bandera,

Every true bullfighter <sup>dreamed of</sup> ~~hoped for~~ measuring the man,

Measuring his rage, keeping his courage and his art

To the end. The matador could not do less.