

Elephant Carcasses Stained with Vulture Droppings Lie in a Field in Uganda

Hey! Its a crazy world, this
battered series of perceptions,
the red indolent glazing
of her tongued hibiscus, shivering
and staggering at 3 am on A Sunday
before the papers and the spiritual
assembly has arrived, alas
(we live in separate monadic episodes
carved in the ivory of temporal lobes)
the tedium of the locomotive squealing
the arbitrary corundum-hard gaze of
morning apparitions and symbolic
quiescence in the shimmering doldrums
of laconic light.

Events unfold and loom before us
like an argon mask bubbling in the antique atmosphere
there lie the elephants: slow-mating,
not-forgetting death mounds splayed in the
African sun, maps of themselves lying in
a naked reality of soil like the Borges
tale rotting in the blunt Auschwitz terrain
of the ivory butcher's perfumed massacre.
Information flows, great networks interconnecting
with spatial liquidity in the dust-wrung air, speaks

of how we are moving towards a frightening conclusion:

only the distant buzzing of flies can alleviate
the painful squeeze of the dolomitic air.

Then there is the matter of the elephants and to be
morbidly tattooed with the excrement of your own flesh
to be held soft by a lover in the arcane world of hope,
to dance in the erotic foliage of the trill invincible air,
of the same stuff as the elephant once breathed.

(flesh eating rock can be carved
the same as ivory)

II

That the excrement of vultures is white fecal paint
on the kabuki face of death is perhaps a detail that
goes unnoticed in the living rooms of most Americans
and their kin, while grandma that illusive wisp of a woman
offers up

nothing more of herself than recipes, weather reports
and medical synopses

prepares dinner

when

from nowhere she pictures a vulture tearing
flesh and screams, drops dinner, chicken in
white flour, the color of vulture droppings,
goes everywhere and the family comes a runnin'

she stares (

eyes white (as titanium oxide

she glimpsed the other side
the magic underbelly)
of every moment)
vast oceans of understanding
thunder and roar in her ears
stones are gathering under the Earth's
crust, under the weight of the dead pachyderms
she feels magma pouring into voids
the ecclesiastic pull of hydrothermal liquids
warring elements of dark metallic species
bubbling in a matrix of crystalline complexity.

III

Give them proper burial!
I find myself screaming
from a dark pulpit, neon
signs flash around, strange
shadows, half shadows, penumbral
scents drifting in and out of
consciousness, give them
linkage, allow them to converge
on holy ground, allow them
more than hollow dignity --
protect them from
the discrete estimators
of human indifference.

IV

Awake, early morning,
thinking of the elephants: my own
transformation, Once I sized up
ivory for the taking, rented planes
to search the interior, elaborate
plans, expectations that everything would
be provided on time for GREAT WHITE HUNTER, darting
amongst elephant legs and trunks.

V

We are a delicate breed of
sardonic wits: murdered commuters no
less innocent than the elephants, boiled
in our sad tanks on the way home from
work -- relieved of our duties, fired
terminated, canned.
There is no death 'cept the cool
breath which seeps in under the door
and how you learn to live with it
and how you learn to score
but, then again
the elephants were killed by family men
to support children, aspirations, dreams
of a better life (career goal: ivory
poacher, unlikely), they were slaughtered
by men with values of their own, religious

icons kept around the house, night school,
learn dry wall, computers,
estimate the size of your own superstition
earn money in your sleep
learn to be good neighbor
to everyone, but large gray
quadrupeds, I remember Babar, like
it was yesterday, he had charisma
he was Eur-African/Asian, the ear size
is how you tell and I can't quite remember
his, but nonetheless
where everything leaves its own scent
the earth becomes
a complex of
distant
rain.

VI

The fear of nuclear war is passe'

'cept perhaps North Korea. Does North

Korea have zoos: elephants? Poems not allowed

I bet. Who are these people -- the postmodern era is full of people who are *not*, what do they care about elephants, lying dead in some stinkin' African jungle.

Political rituals -- bombast

spread wide as the wings

of vultures. Everyone gathers

in a large room, Piss on the dictator:

someone might be thinking
but he ain't saying. He might be
dreaming of elephants who dance
in a circus, somewhere distant
with candy and popcorn.

VII

Am alone in my room again
focused on primal dirt
distracted by an electronic medium
I don't understand
pretending some modicum of normalcy
amidst the rotting flesh of
uncomfortable circumstance
the thorough and precise slaughter
of all relevant ideas for a vague
trophy with which to wave about and
how the language of randomness let's
you take your place among
several billion souls
you could be an elephant hunter
or the buyer of ivory, you could
wear a hollow smile and rehearse how
to appear at parties, as though everything
is explainable in quick pithy staccato,
as though anybody gives a
damn about the unlucky few.

You could stare at the elephants lying,
couldn't you? Emptying every other glass
of wine with a shrill laugh and a sense
of abandon.

Note: You = Me