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ekphrasis magazine

winter 2022





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Dear Reader,

Floating through these pages are pieces from a series by our contributor, Henry Hu. As you'll read in the full artist statement within, for Hu, inspiration comes from "the stolen moments in-between," with "seemingly the whole world suspended, when all there is left is our gaze — a little bleary, a little distorted, just enough for a fleeting glimpse."

This issue is full of such gazes and such glimpses. Twinkle Banerjee's "Grey Area" reframes the usually marginal vegetation of dense urban places. In "10 Theses On Blank Things," Nupur Shah leaves us with the image of "the undulating wave of nothing" that "bear[s] witness to the linear strike of this elliptical gazing." Anne Duncan describes an eye "eager to run." Randall Potts's "Hall of Mammals" is bewitched by the gaze of a grizzly bear in a room of dioramas, "windows into mind as much as habitat." Like the speaker of that poem, these works are concerned with their own position as windows: when they might invite the reader in, when they might obscure their contents, what or who might wait within.

In particular, our contributors illuminate their encounters with other media, as they look to music, to painting, to literature, to photography, to the lives of other artists and their own. Joshua Gottlieb-Miller and Madeline Blair both look to Rothko, while B.J. Wilson looks to his own brother's paintings. D. Walsh Gilbert draws on the visual form of a Joaquin Torres-Garcia painting, as Gottlieb-Miller experiments with Rothko's color fields. Stephen Rendon's poems dart through TV screens, channel-surfing through "black and silver static smoke," in speculative jumps into the future (what, for example, might "the landfills" be "if it never stopped raining?") and nostalgic traces (and distortions) of the past. Colin James takes up and riffs on the image of Proust's madeleine, and Jake Alden's "A Festival Tale" offers up storytelling as itself something sinfully delicious to consume. Tim Tomlinson's poems toggles between anxiety, sunlight, evidence, bones, clouds, too little coffee and too much, in mediations of Schoenberg and Satie. In all cases, we were taken by the little details our contributors emphasized, the way they reimagined, fragmented, speculated, distorted, and played on these works, peering into and peeking out of them, turning the objects of their attention so that they caught new light.

Welcome to the third issue of Ekphrasis Magazine. We hope you enjoy it as much as we have.

With thanks,
Jay, Hannah, & Michelle

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Twinkle Banerjee

10 THESES ON BLANK THINGS

Nupur Shah

——— *after Alberto Giacometti's Gazing Head (1928-29)*

i.

god said let there be two bumps
& there were two bumps

ii.

i am searching for language without having to make use of it

iii.

vertical axis: existence
horizontal axis: numerousness, or, essences

iv.

plinth of life uncage the bird of my ribs

so let me breath under the sky's hinges

v.

lest man succeed in getting the line drawn straight human fate is an asymptote &
Eden lies just around the curve that is forever curving

vi.

to have to be content with staring at the mortal sea when once there swirled &
sloshed in me the amniotic ocean!

Henry Hu

FAIRY DUST



- vii.
slab on slab of alabaster memory keep despite the perpetual unmooring of all
Thing
- viii.
praise for that performance of love-making that climaxes by impregnating a lan-
guage-species
- ix.
to come out from an inside or to go in from the outside
- x.
on the undulating wave of nothing bear witness to the linear strike of this elliptical
gazing

excerpt from HALL OF MAMMALS

Randall Potts

——— *after Krasznahorkai*

1.

Dim musty, paneled room of dioramas, a word derived from the Greek “dia” (through) & “horao” (view), so “to see through” which here means to see it is unchanged since childhood: Grizzly Bear still turns his grey woolly head towards me, his deep-set, unfathomable eyes, huge gleaming black nose, his small ears almost comic, his expression more curious than startled or afraid; still “extinct in California” in 1932 as the placard reads & asking the Librarian I learn, installers Egmont Rhett & Ben Wright kept rejecting specimens brought in by hunters, trappers or ranchers, she suspects from old letters exchanged among these “artists” that the proffered carcasses were too large for the space allotted for Grizzly Bear; the background had already been painted by Belmore Browne, the sandstone boulders, patches of green lichen, rye grass, grey leaves, a lone stunted Coyote Brush bush clinging to a crevice between stones, all this was already put in place by the installers, so they waited for a Bear’s carcass to fit into the space. Grizzly bewitched me in this “Hall” of windows into mind as much as habitat; all these 40 years, he’s looked at me as I arrived, as I stood returning his gaze, then departed & returned, carrying a wilderness I found, inhabited & relived in his reliable body (his dull fur, the armature of his constructed pose), his confidence & curiosity & still I sit before him (contrived & real), unwilling to break his gaze & return to a world that no longer includes him in the lower 48, & soon enough, will include neither of us except as whatever is made of us after we are gone.

3POEMS

Stephen Rendon

The landfills if it never stopped raining?

\$40 a month for cowboys in the 1880's
torn grass flower crumbs plastic driftwood cups
around the rodeo trash-can
before it's put into a landfill

The early chapters of genesis without wood to put in piles
St. Thomas slowly dunked into Lake Mead
two years of blended destruction
waves of population leaving at different speeds

1930s iso 100, f/5.6, adjusted SP
ninety years of graphed drought
iso 200, f/16, SP 1/200

1936 rodeo workers' association
small brown flies around the trash can
the horse eyes in my chair
with the Gulf of Mexico on fire
dim light of my phone screen
flickering orange and away from orange
the same as the waves in person the waves as pixels

a camera angled under the stems
on the screen a preview of the petals
mixed with shaped stars and trash

Whenever I want to add beauty to memories of growing up

because tv was maybe more of a distraction
and lights covering trash outside
and coming through the windows
hanging on the drywall
and falling are fine
but the police were only there because we'd called them

I'll add fields of maize
and different plants
that come back to life
from the 90's when we first moved in
Sometimes they do just turn into frozen pizza
or tacos or scratched vhs tapes

and i push those things back into
new colors and petals
before you eventually ask why you need them to be a certain shape
where the stubbornness of what beauty is came from

when did poverty start being clay
lifted smoothed over parts erased
and me looking for new chunks to add

at times it seemed beautiful
You know the family stories now
that you were too young to know before
and try to change them
things you had nothing to do with
and can't change
They end up looking like tv
and the same dinner you've had every night for a week



Henry Hu

LET IN

rest | — | 1950s-2020s

The tv's on.
Somehow brighter with the sun coming through
the open windows.
The whole glowing room a soundstage:
we're not Leo Carrillo
and most of us were in baggy shorts
house shoes or no shoes no boots half asleep
on a couch drinking beer.

The real connection between us as workers and vaqueros in the 1830's
never noticed on these days off. In our small room with millions of viewers
50 years from the original airing
we were closer to town's people watching the two heroes change the shape of our
shadows as they ride by on horses.

Two days earlier my friend stole the two six-packs we're drinking from out of his
work's fridge. No chase or consequences
until a few shows later the Hispanic actors dressed as bandits
get run out of the on screen town and an old coworker of ours
loses his job for taking \$50 worth of merchandise over three years.

The channel changes to our real westerns: 80's love scenes and literal white dreams
filmed on the shores of the beach
named after the Cisco kid's side-kick.

I make the jump from yellow filters in the black ashtray to
panhandling in the Hollywood hills.
Aluminum beer cans in bags for 35 cents a pound
so you make more leaving the last warm sip spit back past the tab.

No plants different draped fabrics or it's there skin falling slowly down.
The slow recognition of my grandpa coming back from some war. My dad not going.
And most in the room have never voted.

I'm seeing the tv shows how I'm seeing them: a burning campfire.

Black and silver static smoke.

AUTHENTICITY

Joshua Gottlieb-Miller

Twenty-five years after his arrival, Marcus Rothkowitz became an American citizen and, two years later, he was Mark Rothko. He also left behind his first wife.

Are you who you are,
or who you were supposed to be?
What does revision

In place of the realistic genre scenes that had dominated his work, Rothko turned to 'tragic and timeless' themes from Greek mythology and Christian iconography, which he combined with subtle references to Jewish burial practices and the Holocaust.

have to do with authenticity?
My poetry has always been
more Jewish than me

And yet, I am most drawn to his invention of suffering, to the incident which is not always portrayed as his act of imaginative Jewishness:

Although there were apparently no pogroms in Dvinsk at that time, Rothko's awareness of such events was nonetheless very real—many years later, the artist even described a scar on his nose as the result of Cossack violence.

It is hard to parse the layers of that scar.

SIX EFFECTS OF SCHOENBERG'S FIVE PIANO PIECES, Op 23

Tim Tomlinson

I

I am anxious.
I am not myself.
Sunlight. Cloud. Late morning.
I've had too much coffee. No,
too little.
I don't know
what to expect
but I expect it
I wait for it
it doesn't come
or if it does it isn't
what I'd expected
The open window, a kid on a tricycle,
a tricycle made of plastic.
Plastic.

II

Never again.
I know that now.
Now I know that.
Yes, I knew it before now,
you kind of always know it,
but now

Henry Hu

SHEETS

PASSING PARADE

Those odd phases and periods, the stolen moments in-between, there is always this strange infolding of vacuity, a mental collapse of sorts. Uncanny, even mystical to say the least. These states of transitions, the waitings, the boring bits, seemingly the whole world suspended, when all there is left is our gaze — a little bleary, a little distorted, just enough for a fleeting glimpse ... perhaps, to recognize the slow temporality of all passings, or simply, to appreciate the spell of nostalgia.

HENRY HU (b. 1995, Hong Kong) is a Sydney-based artist. Hu's emerging practice commits to an infusion. An exchange. An immediacy. A link between the interior and the exterior — of a self, a being, an identity, a consciousness.

Each series offers an overarching narrative, steps away from the present for a spell: tasked with casting new perspectives, fresh air to breathe, a spiritual relief.



I feel like
I mean

III

there's a sinkhole you want
to avoid
near a subway
the downtown #1 I think

where this old girlfriend . . .
and I probably should have

IV

Is it sinful—
Is sin ...
No
(yes)
I met a German writer whose work
was all about

there is no narrative.

I mean ...

V

black and white photographs
from the 1950s –

I'm on a toy tractor,
or is that my brother?
My grandmother's ankles,
my grandfather's white socks.
Where is my mother? My father?
Christ.
The driveway is gray,

the Chevy Impala.

VI

The peculiar act of repeating
that which gives no pleasure,
that which takes pleasure in negating pleasure,
that which takes pleasure in creating un-pleasure,
takes pleasure in arguing against the existence of pleasure,
or not pleasure, really—gratification. Something.
Something I'd need
Susan Sontag to explain
That which—
I am anxious.

SPRINGFIELD STATION

——— *after Edward Hopper's Sunset Railroad (1929)*

Dream for stillness of the trackside,
where hills toss slow
like Brighton Beach low tide,
and the setting sun politely waits
for an artist to catch
its rainbow-sherbet: always
wrong on my palette,
but Hopper picked it out
like a tick
from an armpit.
I see me there in that booth
waiting impatient
for the rumble
of the Northeaster's
northward stumble.
My eye eager to run: straight on
train tracks like fingers
stretched past the point
of a yogi's pain – pointing
northbound again:
to walks through Massachusetts woods,
used book stores, doughnut shops
& (see that horizon speck?)
college house parties where someone
is always calling – Does anyone
have a light!

Anne Duncan

As it is, with every wheel
on train track tumble comes a flop
in my stomach for forgotten
Dramamine bottles
still
in the bathroom cabinet.



Henry Hu

IT HANGS

ROTHKO BEFORE THE
COLOR FIELDS

Joshua Gottlieb-Miller

Self-portrait
in every phrase
from “he’s a striver”
to “stained glass Jews.”

Lord G-d of Monochrome Beauty,
forgive semi-abstraction.
Who cares for a single ear
rotting among ripe fruits?
Surrealism was already dying
when Rothko butchered it,
before the war.

He knew better
after the war.
We’re sitting in The Rothko Chapel,
Owen and I; I don’t mention
Rothko’s suicide
to Owen,
or the war. I didn’t

know much about Rothko before.

I used to enjoy coming here more.

Nor have I ever seemed
nor represented,
*“The true type
of the Jewish martyr.”*

{ }Enjoy?
Enjoin?
Now I can
tell Owen about Rothko,
or how the first thing the Jews

of Houston did,
when they were enough to pray,
is the first thing
all immigrant communities do:
they raised a cemetery.
Moments like this I need
to whisper in his ear,

the meaning of the art,
some key to unlock
everything I still don’t understand.
We sit in silence,
watch paintings hang
in the little light
from the hole that lets in sky.

As the sun began to sink toward the trees on the horizon, members of the Temple began to parade in and out of the largest house, carrying with them platters piled high with food and a couple kegs. They set them all upon the picnic tables, tapped the kegs, and invited us to come and join them. I set down the camera for a bit and accepted the invitation.

The solo cups they offered us turned out to contain mead instead of beer, and the sweet booze went down easily. I enjoyed a couple cups as I picked over their proffered spread. There wasn't too much available for a vegetarian like me, but I sampled some sort of potato salad—too much mayonnaise and the raisins didn't help—and a slice of pumpkin pie—which was delightful. Around Frank, Randy and me, the cultists chattered noisily and giddily, but it was hard to even think of them as cultists, then—they seemed so harmlessly bland and blasé. The only reminder during that dinner that they were neo-pags was when Peter brought out an acoustic guitar and sang a paean to Morpheus.

Soon, the sun had vanished over the horizon, but the big bonfire still lit up most of the clearing, and the Third Temple started assembling folding chairs in a large ring around it. Cantor Carly informed Frank that the Festival's most holy rites were about to be observed, and so I collected my camera and started shooting again.

Once the worshippers were seated, Huck Garvey rose and strolled over to stand beside the bonfire, backlit by it so he was turned to a silhouette. I couldn't really manage to get a good shot of him with such shit lighting, but I recorded everything he said.

Garvey launched into a long-winded sermon that was a bit difficult to follow, going on and on about the importance of narrative in human development. He told the story of Baldr's death and Osiris' resurrection—those, at least, were interesting—and then made some claims that we'd one day all be reborn ourselves, by the grace of Azazan.

"Now it's time," Garvey continued. "To welcome back our Harbinger, the Right Hand of Azazan, so that they may observe the Harvesting of Tales!"

He gestured to the treeline, and I realized with a start that somebody was walking out of the forest, strolling toward us with cool confidence. As I trained the camera on them, I realized at long last I was looking at someone as spooky as I expected from a pagan institution. They were dressed in a heavy, trailing sable cloak, with a hood covering their hair, and on their face...

Their face was obscured by a big fucking bird skull-like, this thing was prehistoric. The beak was two feet long if it was an inch, and the whole bony affair covered the entirety of their skin, leaving nothing exposed except for their gleaming eyes. And it looked like bone, too—the perfect shade and texture—though at the time I thought that couldn't possibly be right.

Now, of course, I'm not so sure.

"The Harbinger is here," Garvey announced, as the robed and masked figure stopped beside him to bend at the waist, bowing toward the spectators. "Let the Harvest begin."

Without warning, a man rose from the midst of the audience and started speaking, and I panned over to him quickly to try to get his face in frame. In his brassy baritone, he began telling a story that had the rhythms of a memorized folktale, though it wasn't any narrative that I recognized. It was a grim and gothic tale about an old woman in Scotland who was terrorized by poltergeists until she hung herself in the closet.

I'll be honest, I was pretty disturbed by the whole thing. It felt pretty fucked up to just go and tell a story like that, without preamble, especially in front of a bunch of kids. Nobody applauded when the man finished, either, so at the time I thought hey, maybe they feel the same way.

The second he sat down, however, another congregant rose—the young mother Frank interviewed earlier—and she launched into a story of her own.

Her story flowed similarly to the man's, though it was a more modern tale. It started out as a meet-cute between a boy and girl back in the '80s, in Silicon Valley, but took a turn for the grim when they were T-boned by a drunk driver the night they got engaged. According to the story, both of them got killed.

Nobody objected to this second tale of tragedy. Instead, when the mother sat back down, another cultist rose.

So it was that Frank, Randy and me got treated to a grotesque litany of mayhem, murder, and melancholia. A total of eight Temple parishioners spoke up in the end, and not a single story that they told ended happily. No one ever applauded—but I was disturbed to slowly realize that a lot of the spectators did nod to themselves contentedly in the face of these awful narratives. A few were even smiling.

Things, at last, were getting weird, but I kept right on shooting, and figured at least Frank had some content he could use for his lurid documentary.

“Gods bless you, every one,” Garvey said, after the eighth storyteller sat back down and no one rose to take their place. “The gifting of tales is a sacred act. Perhaps our guests have some of their own stories to offer to us?”

He looked pointedly in the direction of Frank, Randy and me, and I would’ve cursed aloud if I wasn’t so sure they might hear or the camera might pick it up.

“Uh...sure thing!” Randy said, cleared his throat, and stepped forward to address the waiting crowd.

He tried to tell a condensed version of the novel that he’d pitched to us back in the car, which proved pretty dry and pretty hard to follow, and—I suspected—was something of a disappointment to the Third Temple. Frank’s tale was hardly any better, proving to be nothing more than a canned cliché about a couple trapped on a lonesome stretch of highway, who hear on the radio that an escaped murderer is on the loose.

Then it was my turn. I passed the camera to Randy and stepped forward gingerly, heart racing, hoping I wasn’t as sweaty as I felt. I shouldn’t have cared—it shouldn’t have mattered—but I was supposed to be an aspiring writer, for fuck’s sake. I wanted to impress the Third Temple, even if I was starting to suspect that they were creeps with an unhealthy attitude toward tragedy and raising kids.

What story to tell, I wondered, as I stood before the silenced crowd? Obviously they’d want



something in the vein of the earlier narratives, something deeply sad. The previous tales hadn't all been ghost stories—just narratives that ended tragically. So in the end, I went with an old Yiddish folktale my bubbee told me, back before the cancer got her.

You may have heard it before. Probably not, though. In summary, it's about a goldsmith who betrays his family and lawful wife by beginning an adulterous affair with Lillith. After he dies, the demoness and her kin move into his home, plaguing the man's mortal children, cursing them through no fault of their own.

It was a story I knew well—I'd heard my bubbee tell it maybe half a dozen different times, and I'd even tried to turn the damn thing into a script for a feature film without much success. I knew it inside and out, and it fell from my tongue easily. I even used different voices for each character.

I told the assembled cultists the Tale of Lillith and the Goldsmith, and they listened, rapt, and seemed to like it, and that made me...I'll admit, that made me feel fucking good. There's nothing quite like having an audience on the edge of their seats, is there? Watching them watch you, seeing how they hang on your every word...

Before that fateful evening, I used to love that feeling.

They didn't applaud when I finished, but I did notice a few smiles and nods among the on-lookers, and I felt pretty self-satisfied as I retreated back to the edge of the assembly and Randy passed my camera back to me.

"What a lovely tale!" The hooded figure beside Huck Garvey bawled, and I was shocked to realize that it must be a young woman—or what sounded like a young woman—behind the bird's skull mask.

"We thank you, honored guests, for lending us a hand with this decade's harvest!" she—the Harbinger—continued, spreading gloved hands wide in a welcoming gesture. "It's always such a treat to hear tales in new voices. I daresay this will be a Festival to remember."

Scattered, jubilant assent was voiced throughout the crowd.

"Now..." The Harbinger tapped the tip of her beak, pantomiming pensiveness. "What time

is it?"

"Time for the invocation!" A child squealed from somewhere in the crowd. .

"It is indeed!" The Harbinger replied. "The Invocation—our most sacred ceremony, the most special of all communions!"

She was, on the whole, less somber than Garvey had been during his preaching. She had the air of a carnival barker, a circus ringmaster—all bawly jubilation.

"It's time, friends, for the main event!" the Harbinger wailed. "Our greatest of gods has now supped on stories. Our king of kings has fed. So put your hands together, and let's welcome him!"

Applause rippled through the crowd. I panned the camera round, trying to capture the on-lookers' devout delight, the suddenly celebratory atmosphere.

"Let us all invoke the holy name of our mightiest patron!" The Harbinger cried. "Let us name the Lord of Stories, the Glorious God-Bard. His Thaumaturgic Majesty, Author Supreme, the Great One, Azazan!"

As one—from the tiniest tots to venerable elders like old Huck Garvey—the crowd began to chant.

AZ.

AZ.

AN.

AZ!

AZ!

AN!

AZ!

AZ!

AN!

When they all screamed the syllables together like that, it didn't really sound like a nonsense word anymore. It sounded like a spell.

As the chanting continued, a chill danced its way down my spine. I felt something prickling the back of my neck, but I kept the camera trained upon the chanting crowd.

It was after sixteen repetitions of His name that things went sideways.

With a whoosh, the bonfire died down to banked embers in the span of a second, and I was trying to work out how the Temple had pulled off this practical effect as the cult fell silent at long last. Many of them rose up from their chairs—some holding hands, some kneeling down upon the grass, some stalking round the perimeter of the dying fire, and I didn't know where exactly to point my camera. I kept panning round, and round, not really noticing the figures creeping behind me...

Remember, Randy, Frank and me were all several solo cups of mead in by this point in the evening. I could've kept holding a camera steady...ish, but that was about it—my reflexes were shot, and I had little fight in me. So it caught me completely off-guard when several men and women behind me suddenly laid firm hands upon my shoulders and shoved me down, into a sitting position, upon a cold, folding chair I hadn't realized was behind me.

“The fuck!” I screamed in surprise, while Randy and Frank made similar noises.

“Easy now,” Cantor Carly whispered in my ear. “Pass us the camera. It'd be a shame for it to break.”

“What the hell are you doing?” I demanded, as beardy Peter plucked the camera from my hands, surprisingly gingerly. One of the teen girls came at me from the right and pinned my wrist to my hip, while her twin did the same thing on my left.

“Azazan!” The Harbinger screamed. “We present you with gifts!”

One second, the air above the bonfire's glowing ashes was nothing more than empty space. The next, He was there.

PROUSTIAN IDOLATRY

Colin James

the cold hands and cheerios years

Petite Madelene a cake
to ruin the best appetite.
Thighs like sighs without
my mutant mustache tickler.
Pray let us not be
psychologically inconvenienced.
I'm getting up in a second
and plan to drag the rest
of the room after me.

Casually, as you would a finger.

Henry Hu

MOTOR



—— after Mark Rothko

heat wave

lie down

caved in

yesterday's tremor
{to no avail}

Spanish bullfight

plums, icebox
plums, icebox
plums, icebox

cluster headache

brightest Venus

*

wouldn't make me mad
no, it wouldn't

—— after Gregory Crewdson's Unititled (Maple Street)

Girl says, *anywhere*
is fine. Says, *this is close enough*.
She doesn't know where

her shoes have gone without her.
I'll give my shoes, will rough my feet
to walk beside her.

Won't even ask her
no-name. I know
her, how she stands

struck in headlights,
hung in shadow boxes.
There, on the wall,

girls with destination anxiety
wait for us to watch
the curve of their calves,

to wonder at their placement
there, in the belly of the street
or toeing into doorframes.

I'm told this is an exhibition of home.

But are these those — houses
heaving sighs in their frames?

These frames?

FISH IN THE MIDDLE OF IT

D. Walsh Gilbert

——— *after Joaquin Torres-Garcia's Untitled Composition (1929)*

each widget | fits | into a box || sometimes they are
initials | epistles | post-its | ransom notes | or not ||
a capital | where it shouldn't be || otherwise | a stick figure

drawn | as with a finger in wet sand | before wave foam
pulls the message | to the sea || 29 | a code | a map |
a tenement cell || action locked inside | double-wall con-

crete | chambers echoing | like a five-chambered heart |
beating off-key || untitled composition | quite indecisive ||
a clock | a sail | a window | doorknob | circles | the curve

of a woman's body | a face with one eye | and a fish nudging
the hour to wake each morning | so you can paint | your place
in the jumble | of tossed building blocks | & compartments ||



Henry Hu

THE GLEAM

FALSEHOODS AND BANALITIES
IN SATIE'S TROIS GNOSSIENNES

Tim Tomlinson

The assumption that a piece of music must summon up images of one sort or another, and that if these are absent the piece of music has not been understood or is worthless, is as widespread as only the false and banal can be.

————— Arnold Schoenberg

I: Lent

The last thing, the last thing I want,
the last thing I want to think about
I think about first. The last thing I want
to think about is the first thing on my mind.
It's the first thing I think about, I think
about it first and again. First and again,
and again and first, and now. (And again.)

I didn't do it. I didn't do it exactly,
at least not in the way it's been described.
I certainly didn't mean to do it.
I didn't. Or maybe I did. I did it—
in the sense that it happened. It did
happen. I don't say it didn't. It did.
It happened. And I was there when it did,
there for all of it. But so was she. She was there.
It couldn't have happened without her. Without us.
She was so there. Demonstrably there
when it happened, with me.

It's no one's fault. It's hers. It's mine.
Mine, or hers. There's no blame. I blame her,
she blames me, I don't blame her. She didn't
make me do it, but she wanted me to.
It happened because she was there and
practically caused it to happen, willed it
to happen, wanted it to happen,
very much. She wanted it very much.
I'm sure. There's evidence. Evidence is there.

II: Avec Éttonnement

it starts at the sagittal suture
of the occipital fissure
where the parietal bones meet
beneath the scalp
under the follicles
and it corkscrews down
and grows smaller
and smaller
but deeper
and deeper
and when it's just
a little pinprick
the tiniest little pinprick—
like a penny at the bottom of a pool,
a dot on a blank sheet of paper—
it throbs
like a toothache
a toothache the way

a toothache throbs
from the deep tiny dendril
of the root in the molar
up through the face
to the sagittal suture
where it meets itself
and starts again
and what starts it

III. Lent

there isn't much I can do I can do
only so much and I did it I did
quite a lot I did so much but maybe
not as much as I could do not as much
as she wanted me to and she wanted
me to very much and she will know when
she reads this that it's about her about
us about how much I could do and didn't
it's all about her but that's the last thing
because the things that fall apart are
the things that last

MY BROTHER'S PAINTINGS #3

B.J. Wilson

My brother rendered the black water
with shades of greens instead,
so that a bright field appears to flow.

But in the photo from which he painted
the creekbanks were both snowbound,
a darker current cut through those trees.

I know because I captured the image
with a camera that I'd gotten that Christmas,
before I knew about the measurement
of light, how it travels, framing a composition
without a sentence. He was the one who
had to put our terrier down after her stroke,
vowed that he'd never get a dog again.
In the photo and in the oils, she scans woods,
points back to the trail we'd take to the creek
below our subdivision, tail straightened
as if she were needed at home, for harm we were
too young to grasp. But in here there's nothing
from which brothers need guarding:
boys walking dogs in the undercurrent,
wind in its grass. It's funny how dogs get close

Henry Hu

WHITESINK



when you let them, he says, on the phone,
so far away. We just got a mutt from the pound,
a two-year-old we didn't have to name.

UNDER THE SUN

Nupur Shah

—— after *Giacometti's Walking Man (I) (1960)*

after the hecatomb the smell of burnt flesh resonating in you
slap of pavement foot foot foot foot

you bow your head desiring to make your mother out of airy thin
but she is not here and yet you breathe in and out as if she were
here & the undead

[remember remember a world is the door through which imaginaty homelands will
always rise and fall like the waving agony of history]

instead you decide to unbossom yourself at your feet

but here where dust is a blanket shrouding the earth's bodily grief

you cannot feel your own unbearable lightness of unbecoming

& so you want to abandon everything elsewhere

but instead you decide once again to prolong suffering
by stretching your life down your limbs
as if to endure were to succeed mourning is better than nothing
you know this but you don't say this (you don't say anything)

so you say nothing as such

praise to these legs that swallow so much space grace to these hands holding
so much time

instead you walk (or dream walkingly) away from the hecatomb
whose fumes rising behind you point the farthest ahead of them



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