

AUCTION

What was I wearing?

...

I don't recall.

...

I remember walking down a series of switchbacks
away from the Italianate mansion
where all of her children died.

...

Night was entering, inching over the world
horizontally from right to left, the moon's structured whiteness
an *objet d'art*.

...

Then we arrived at the beautiful space
filled with beautiful gold-flecked people.

...

Everywhere strings of light, illuminated filigree,
a world webbed with stars, the feeling of bodily effervescing.

...

No, I hadn't been to the track.

...

I'd heard that was where squalor lived,
a barely contained seediness that was allowed.

...

I am one who has been reared to prefer the cultivated,
even the men trailing with push brooms
in tuxedos as they sweep up the bready droppings

that break apart so easily,
loosing their fragrance of grass and earth.

...

Why should this veneer fail me now?

...

Watching the crowd lean forward, smelling their hunger,
the sound of the gavel falling like a cudgel on a head,
and the good people rushing forward
to shake the hand of the victorious.

...

I saw our history in it,
roped right there in the ring.

...

The muscled beauty of excellence, the monocular acuity,
how the breadth of the eye
evolved for speed.

...

It stood on the dais as the groom lovingly turned
its best side to the light, its best side
being every side, coat gleaming like blackest water.

...

The whole room instantly aroused—
the men's pants tenting, the women with their sudden secretions
as happens when you are in the presence
of the holiest of forms.

...

It was looking at us with an awareness beyond time,
casting its fifty-foot parabolic gaze
broadly over the earth.

...

Admittedly, as my mind filled with images
of heated brands and whips, I thought of Christ last,
the petals of blood licking His face.

...

It was every being who has ever stood centerstage in chains—
all of us implicated simply by being there
regardless of sympathy or intent.

...

Ecce homo.

...

Then I heard a voice shout “2.2”
and another go higher.

...

The most pragmatic teaching Jesus ever gave:
render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s,
render unto God what is God’s.

...

The gavel finally falling on 2.8 million.

...

But what if we don’t know the difference?

...

No, it wasn't just my presence
that made me a participant to spectacle, which explains
why I've carried this haunting ever since.

...

He said the poor will be with us always,
and I ran with it—I let it
let me off the hook.

...

Then the groom, tuxedo dark as ink,
himself descended from such brutality,
turned and led it out.

NEO-COLONIALISM

After she screamed, in an act of transference
the German took a folding chair into the ocean
and flicked it onto the beach. A small crowd formed.
Earlier I saw a man without any hands
carrying firewood down the strip, his arms
perfectly flat at the wrists as though the devices
had been knifed clean off. The plot
finally got to me and I went to interpolate,
join the crowd. It was a medusa, the iridescent lobe
of its genital-less body the size of a small dog—
it was at once translucent and opaque, metaphor
and thing-in-itself, its frayed tentacles
still stimulated, writhing, and we all stood there
watching its gelatinous throes, its thematic structure
water-dependent, dying, the thing a society, millions
of individuals forming an integrated self.
Local vendor #67 asked us why we landed it.
Previously that summer her hat blew off
but one of us heroically brought it back.

LIVING FOSSIL, LIVING GOD

Admittedly, there is something about its face,
the boxy pugilistic snout, the prehistoric eyes
that seem to stare down through

80 million years back to the very days of T-rex.
Though taxonomically the frilled shark is no snake
cutting through the lightless waters 5,000 feet down,

the creature looks to be the very essence
of the reptilian brain—cold-blooded, beyond
even the crocodile, that seemingly soul-less

armory of plates, a creature grounded wholly in the now
with no inner life beyond the moment. What would it be
to be this presence skirting through the dark

with its rows of teeth, a consciousness beyond mind
that watches what mind does, its sorrows,
a being that grows its young for three and a half years

in the dark night of its belly, the longest gestation
of any in the animal kingdom, and how it only comes to us
from time to time, pulled up in some fisherman's net

for all to behold the undying wonders of the sea?
To have lived on into the anthropocene,
this creature mostly blind, simply structured, unchanging,

feeding on small squids and fishes, others of its kind—
please don't misunderstand. I believe God does not exist
in time, but because we do, we cannot understand It.

But imagine eighty million years, passing second by second.
When I look at this silvery beast, I see God.