

Nocturne for E.F. Schumacher

Is it a nocturne if there is no night sky to contemplate,
 just Pollock canvasses of radiation, carbon dioxide, and dust?
The stars still exist,
 but mankind has damned them to a century of shroud.

Is it a nocturne without the crickets and the mourning doves,
 extinct
after the poison crept slowly up the food chain?
 The dusk is a vacuous silence now,
except for the post-Oppenheimer hum
 of a slaggy, gelatinous nuclear power plant:
a radioactive monument to mid-20th century hedonism.

Is it a nocturne if no one breathes to write it,
 the only evidence of God's sixth-day creations
the steel beams, plastic bottles, and calcified rib cages
 rotting into the non-existence
in the shadows of glass skyscrapers?

The static sings a silent eulogy for us,
 we who tied the knot and kicked the chair out from underneath ourselves
despite the warnings of white-coated prophets,
 we who denied the ramifications of our lusts
until the asphyxiating end.

Call It an Old Folks Home If That Makes You Feel Better

Bells and alarms and
carbonated pops and screaming men
and incontinent women and blue
gloves every thirty feet and the smell
of rubbing alcohol and syrup-soaked
fruit and low ceilings and entry codes
and hand sanitizer dispensers and
fire extinguishers and southern accents
and satellite tv and showers
on Tuesdays and Fridays and
photographs labeled with forgotten
names and unexplained laughter
and hydraulic beds and nurses that
don't give a shit about your loved ones
and tvs blaring FOX News:

All of this a sign of the ascension
of all souls heavenward.

Taking the Anthill

[Italics taken from Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory*]

A man with a white line
down an imperialist jowl

Hello there soldier. Ready to kill more Germans?

*There's no such thing
as shellshock.*

We've all got the hats of the invaders
that particular crest
over heavy eyebrows

*we went to school together
before the war.
He thinks I don't have enough respect
for him. He's right.*

We kill our own men: cowardice

*a sneaky, booze-guzzling,
yellow-bellied rat
with a bottle for a brain
and a streak of spit
where his spine ought to be.*

*If I had the choice between
mice and Mausers with a capital M
that's Fritz Lang for you movie buffs*

Call: *Bayonet or machine gun?*
Response: *most of us are more afraid
of being hurt
than of being killed*

A long walk down a hallway of men
stacked like salted pork
ready to be roasted
and set upon by Deutschland,
Uber Alles.

Shrieking bastard

black and white bombshells
 bloody with pulp of unwed men

lumbering
 lumbering
 lumbering

Slowly devolving to primordial self
 as fellow men lose guts and garters
 he drops, drips, droops

If those little sweethearts won't face German bullets
 they'll face French ones

They've skim milk in their veins

A man with PTSD
 a whistleblower
 and a victim of chance

Even in black and white
 the French flag still bleeds.

There are times when I am ashamed to be a member of the human race and this is one such occasion...I protest against being prevented from introducing evidence that I consider vital to the defense, the prosecution presented no witnesses, there has never been a written indictment of charges made against the defendants, and lastly, I protest against the fact that no stenographic record of this trial has been kept. The attack yesterday morning was no stain on the honor of France, but this court-martial is such a stain...Gentlemen of the court, to find these men guilty will be a crime to haunt each of you to the day you die. I can't believe that the noblest impulse in man, his compassion for another, can be completely dead here. Therefore, I humbly beg you to show mercy to these men.

Sunlight through prison bars
 on roast duck, eggs, rye bread
 and a clay pitcher of water

See that cockroach? Tomorrow morning we'll be dead and it'll be alive. It will have more contact with my wife and child than I will. I'll be nothing, and it'll be alive.

This whiskey bottle is my religion

Let's waltz before we kill
 1, 2, 3,
 1, 2, 3

The troops are like children. Just as the child wants his father to be firm, troops crave discipline and one way to maintain discipline is to shoot a man now and then.

*Take your coats off.
No use hanging them around here.*

Cowboy priest making the sign of the cross and the drums stop and the guns go.

*Cat calls and whistles at a little pearl,
washed ashore by the tides of war*

Come on honey, sing us a song

[Insert complete lyrics of *The Faithful Hussar* here]

Sigmund's Holy Freon

It's too hot to think about God,
so let's speak of Sigmund Freud,
a man who knew his mother's measurements.

Think about this.

If *Hamlet's* Hamlet's hamlet had A/C
even a window unit,
Polonius might still be with us,
not asleep behind a velvet curtain.

If we could hand out half-melted kool pops
in Ferguson, Missouri, then maybe it wouldn't matter
that 94% of the cops are white,
while the rest of the city sits at 29.3%.

Prop up a giant Dyson Airblade on the Mediteranean
and watch as the West Bank and Gaza Strip
melt and congeal with the rest of Palestine
and everyone rotates around the temple
taking turns worshipping the gods
of Abraham, Isaac, and Benjamin Netanyahu.

I Resolve to Keep These New Friends

My back flat on the asphalt in late September
dog breath and screaming dog stars
as Isaac's force pulls us towards the core.
We think about these soft needles of light
and how good things are.
Dylan Thomas and Asimov and others
float between us as the two canines circle.
They arrived mid-construction
and now stay to shield the house on the hill.

The last time I stared up into ink
I crossed hands with my two best friends
as we laughed, smiling
outside the house on Bluegrass drive.
That was the last good time for us three.

Now we are gone, tossed up and scattered
to the four corners of Tennessee.
You mourn a child never born.
You sing—as far as I know—
and I am here, dropping ink slowly.

Those are the stars.
The stars that taught me I needed contacts
The stars that watched us itch under the bridge
The stars that our grandchildren will view
through a mustard cloud of factory smoke,
fifty cents a view, step right up.