

No More Plant Life

Kaleem Hawa

Poetry

after Abner Louima

Were screams to be less dependable
than they've become,
there might have been epistemic wiggle-room,
the sensate pathways might not have calcified,
and the question might have ripped open the belly
of perfect truth.

Instead, a huff and a sigh,
the broomstick stuck the soft edge of the *topos* and

*Then your face broke
like stone. I fell to it
immediately.¹*

Everyone hardened after that, the animalia
cracking through
their teeth on occasion, otherwise:
ruthless, as if a range
for all that had transpired,
delimited for the crop dusting and the cratering,
which a prick called Dante's inferno
in the middle of Gaza's winter

Jedo combed his head every day,
but stopped before this cold came,
and the cat meows started to sound human.
His hair was left tousled,
in part by the discarded brush,
and in part by all the ego and stubborn perfidy,
that the weak among us chalked up to dislocation.

¹ Sylvia Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory" (2006).

Romance: forgiving what is unforgivable,
hovering judgment stayed hovered and
reached out to another orb
to ensure stable reproduction in spite of the twinges of suspicion
that an enemy willed-to-power is just as easily a misrecognition.

You can't misrecognize what you don't see, however. Degrade it, yes,
but it's a far different story to see the industrial rape camps, or the Bronx for that matter,
though someone wrote a song there about a different lynching.
Obscured to us too are the tears, despite them being the *de jure* territory
mistaken for the map of the northwestern region, now dutifully pulled out.²

The MK84 bomb, the bullet core—
both feel somehow ancillary to the broomstick,
its deadweight tonnage leaking particulate matter dredged up as wastewater
to the sewage plant, spun through processors, doused in sodium hypochlorite,
the effluent given a name and occasionally a byline,
after it's been sanitized of all the weird little predilections
of the non-humans involved.

Dare not suggest it,
that there is no more plant life in Gaza or that humans are involved.
(A man five decades earlier points at the jet in the sky,
watering can in hand, squared up around his tree,

every injustice co-constitutive of the resistance to it.)
Dark cold is the real feeling after a flash of fire, I imagine.
No more light means no more reflection, and
so I don't have nightmares like I should.
Instead, I flip through the paper,
and don't see shit,
just some look-at-me nonsense.

A block back, a woman yells into her phone:
IT WAS AGREED YOU HAVE NO SKIN IN THE GAME,
adding:

END OF DISCUSSION.

2 Sylvia Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory" (2006).

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