

Talks Through Me

Lianuska Gutierrez

University of Missouri-Columbia

after a deer hunt, and inspired by Matthew Scully's
examination of the 'holy hunter'

“... an eland coming down an aisle of trees, chapleted with orange blossoms and
bridal veil, a hoof raised in the economy of fear, stepping in the trepidation of flesh that
will become myth; as the unicorn is neither man nor beast deprived, but human hunger
pressing its breast to its prey.”

Djuna Barnes *Nightwood*

Looking for my church today, I don my gun
 like a pageant sash and hi-tech tool my ear;
 what typhoons and lava with these batteries
 minuter nubs than ladybugs. The rustle in the bush
 remembers me taffeta skirt of a childhood heart-fix,
 one I would I have lassoed had I been a grownup cowboy.
 What I would have done with her in hand, I do not know,
 I think she would have fretted her hands over my peach-
 velvet cheeks like a momma rubs your praying mitts in
 between her swamping able hands to infuse with warm.

Wet smut nose of the one about to meet with me, skittish
 as a spider thread in breeze, reminds me the dog I had
 who grew with me; we put him down, for mercy. My hand
 sweeps back dappled bristles in my noggin, heavy with
 the smoke it makes, architect of chuffing machine, whim;
 my mind can also think feel, resurrect a pelt soft as paradise
 descended... my boy in woolens, his balmy skin, hammy calf...
 and pictures, and future... I can wrench (like a lithe real tight-
 hugged carrot from the ground, taken up by pull hard its
 green hair) an other future, and shuttle what would be.

Shot sinks home at base of brain, knees fold like a cheap
 Jap fan, and sinks to earth the beast. I cannot think just
 then how it would spring to flee but its body not now at
 behest, grown other to it, like a severed head watching,
 alive in its no way. That was a body that felt like a charm,
 spry, as if up to tree-twirling breezy as flicking pennies.
 Me in compare am flaccid jelly, an armless urn of pectic goo
 standing without recourse through rain and marauding muzzle.

I sadden hard now, after the kill, as if at the grave of one dear to me. This is part of it too. This is my tie back to Injuns—I've got the holy in me also, like a headdressed motherfucker. Each time, I fall to my knees and cry inside and out when the moment comes. It quivers, looking ahead wide-eyed, in its fear (is that, in eyes?). It is straining, I sit with it and look it in its eyes as it strains, by cause of me. I sit a presence next to it and do not touch; then the last long breath (in taking its time it means me come near, bend low, as a child would whisper, but hallow impart: from it to me, I to it, either going, I guess at its word to me-- all is a ring, holy ladder of high to small makes it a grateful gift of feed to me; I tell it thanks.), it shares with me its last breath. Life force slides placental out of its muscles, as bread losing air the body settles to wood; lit magnet eyes now gummy globules, shiny still with tears, that would look on me, then away, eyes of a taut-nerved actor at once surprise-caught and batting lashes at inflated shutter speed or ribbon taken by a speed fan, and too, understanding all seasons and chains, triangles stenciled over each its eyes, vertigo me then back to business of its demise. I sit, still; hard to leave this spot, this stiff, thin-limbed, stand-in leviathan downed, by me. This communion takes a toll.

Works Cited

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood*. (1936). New Directions, New York. 2006.

Scully, Matthew. *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*. St. Martin's Griffin, Macmillan, New York. Reprint edition (2003).