

Alluvion

by Iain James Robb

(Let me know if anyone wants me to delete this, in light of events in Paris. I originally shelved this because it was followed a few weeks after I'd sent it to an editor by 9/11. That acrostic running through the 2nd and 3rd stanzas was not really deliberate. This poem is fucking cursed.)

There were moments of madness, the funeral call of an owl in the
alders:
Teams of soon-to-be-dead things huddled up and rushed upon
Impalements, mouths in predatory rain: the vicious instruments
Which other creatures like to spill the blood with sparkle: wail
Of orphans the motherless ones, the parents who grieve for spilled
children.
The torture continues as young jacks and fallows plead through the
time of tears.
The quietus, stark, of senses and stares unhinged and fixed on the
rustle
Of other encroachers on leaves, seems to curdle in fear and
expectance;
For all of the sermons the elders make by their silence there is just
The quiver of expectant loins, poised to respond to strange motion,
Fleeing at approach: the rill on the lips of the cavernous delta
Where flesh bathes in its own red ink, adrenaline baste in sprayed
air.
The tongue and the muzzle, the hunger unspayed, wears a warning
And an idiot hind wills to kill itself: it rambles from the brake,
A shutting of jaws on its quarters to follow, no word of advice on its
falling;
The bleeding and death of the tree-sheeted causes weeping in the
space

Where a voice strains to break, reverberates, a whisper on the wind.
Against the break in a wall overgrown with weeds there is the face
Of a predator wrapped in a rapturous violence, of deadening grace.

The stench of limp victims, of cordite and asphalt the impact
showers,
A flurry of dust that follows the break of the buttress of an office
block,
Stings in the bomb-soddened air: the pain of not knowing how,
beforehand,
The smell hurts the nerves, hits without preparation, and chokes.
Endemic to the rape of the concrete on metal, there grow wilted
stems
Of weird mushrooms, meat puppets wrenched nape to the stamen.
Flesh marionettes, drained dolls with ripped strings spill cords of
red on the asphalt,
Strange root-forms of vegetable men with torn tendons that bleed in
the derelict day:
Or car-crash angels, painting the pavement with arms apart at the
elbows,
Mandrakes baptised in the gasoline ashes with no sense to scream
or to weep.
Enter the main square and wail at the gate, in ermines of smoke and
powder,
Taking the hand of the ghost at your near side who bears the same
flesh as your own.
He has held in your hand the faint trinket of blood that will wipe like
severed senses:
It reminds us of your sons' cheeks when they rested on separate
beds than stone.
None of Hell's hovels have ever emitted some dirge for our absent
mourners;
Go to the hole in the road with spare pebbles and make rosaries to
your dead.

Talismans are taken to the place where lives are lost in lands of
ramparts;
Ever and forever, in the citadel mock garlands chain the fractured
statues
Rowing stone-caged with split limbs upon the altar: baleful thrones
Reap clumps of hoar-coloured grass that wraps the hair of
scarecrows,
In islands of ordure where horses let drop the weight of their
wounded riders.
Below them, kept up by five arrows, the mud breeds new bracelets
of poppies,
Low down in a land where the rivers run crimson with semen of red
gods.
Even here, where our dreams are defiled by the gabble of verminous
pigeons:
And here where they skirt their own danger with flights round a
private tower,
New delusions of grace, more paints on Nature, cover its flaws with
a fallow gauze.
Destroyers of deeds that make plain your own palsy, I honour your
destruction:
Nothing subsists where you sit with your worldly wills and cast eyes
on the soil.
Even here, where you come back ashen-winged to wreck the peace
of dreamers,
Where your beads of dead souls alight on my pane, I'll poison you,
and laugh.

