

PIMONE TRIPLETT

Three Plays on Display

1. Ultrasound

My Dearest, my soon- to-be-citizen: these are the made things.
Today's bounce back, the inked in sound waves
showing your face spun shadows, ten digits' skeletal glow—

version of version to us, outside,
nurse-allowed, kindly MD-coaxed:
your heartbeat a four square back lit jellyfish.

Ambassador pulsing from a far sea.

Soon you'll see, this side, how technique forges, forces
the assorted, the all. We get ghost photos
icicled. Your sac of shore

encroaching, your brain budding its someday sputter of I,I,I,I.

Our vision of you
in grainy swill your nation black/blood/eggplant
pledged to the camera's

slide, its tale to tell—*erase new view erase.*

I can tell you this, what was my face before love,		if you ask in time I was born, the story's
never stable. You were, a wave below as this world changes you.	are, the wave	motion, that you can change

2. Natural History Museum, New York

So getting back to Jumbo the Elephant,
 this is how he jumped
 the tracks, but badly.

The Floating Waters, The Ancient Apes, The PreHistorics, The Insect Wing

At home and abroad the interrogators
are tired of limelight.

The great giant having escaped, you see,
 from PT Barnum,
 then run down
 by the railroad train.

This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands

The metropolis, the affronted, the spiky, the columnar, the plinth

“There is a need for permanence
in the heart of the city,
a restoration of origin.”

Thus Jumbo now stuffed, preens, drowzes, at once.
 Pure beast to see, sanserif.
 Hooded, leathern, astral eyes.

Nouns being in this game: Nature. Primitive. Other.

Also: Gnat. Primate. Mother.

Children file by, unriled, to look.

Because necropolis, nest of cement, internetted, interspersed.

Given much huffing and hunting, this,
the bodies appearing,
images taking us.

The photos, the bagged head, the flexi cuffs.

The men piled naked, the girl's thumbs up.

5,442 kg gray African male, 6 years of age, 1.56 meter tusk

Whose America, which display?

The boot to the neck, the prolonged exposure, the panties over their faces.

“To enter the Roosevelt Wing
you must pass through Teddy well mounted
as father and protector
between Indian and African,
both standing,
dressed as ‘savages.’”

This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, so

The stress positions, the darker

necessities,
the epic adventure

early in the morning

Child,

still water-lung'd
covered in fur,

swaddled in belly mud, ooze, you'll be made
to look.

3. National Museum of Culture, Thailand

August dark, druid dark, flesh of your flesh.
The case, that is, the world, behind cases. Anciently splayed

umbrellas in beryl, in amber. A woman burning,
claw nailed, behind her trellis of gold.

Verbs being, my love: to culture, to build, to accrue. Also,
to cult, to buy, to rue. Yours to inherit,

the dark halls elephantine chariots
of kings, the silver headdress sown mother of pearl,

gold stupas holding up the temple by teardrop.
Regarding this minute, this space

you're bred into, you have to take it, back room and all, past
minaret plate glass and tea sets,

lacquered trays and teak barges
pleated in filigree, flesh of your flesh.

Here's a plaque for your great grandfather.
His photo, dust-embalmed,

would-be revolutionary,
one of the winners for a moment, buttoned

bronze, wanting to be modern, which is to say, like us.
We come from colonels

and field marshals, small time city officials, running
the muck of corruptions. As for debris

this side of history, it's yours. Once,
outside these doors, the student uprisings started,

the 77 shot dead on cement, this flesh,
that flesh, yours. In the name of democracy, in the name

of the clean, the soldiers' blood-and-smoke
ate its way from AK-47's. Until

today in the street, standing traffic
chokeholds the city, spews

the scene—white and green taxi-meters, pick-ups
hauling kids to the factories, the families surgical-

masked, piled three and four to a moped.
Yours, that monk who's in hiding, waiting for a bus. I can tell you

he's one of our relations, exiled, a rigger of fake state lotteries.
Or I can give you the aunt, her face fallen as if filled with sand,

her supper brought in on a tray, the twenty-two
tiny bowls of what she won't throw away, week old

noodles, mangosteens shriveled in brine, my lovely,
my child, flesh of my flesh. Also the one-legged girl

begging before the 7-11, the one whose parents
had to maim her

so she could make a better living. Oh please, look up,
look out. Past the scrambled egg trees, the toad-

squatted gray business buildings, past the chiffon
topped houses of prayer. Rumor has it, the flesh of your

flesh has no need
to keep you. It's the same sky. Same swallows

on their way home to bed. Dear born-to,
skin of my skin, do what you can

with your turn—
love the world, let it go.

Notes

Family Spirits, With Voice of One Child Miscarried—the voice of the unborn spirit enters in the traditional Thai form of *khap yanii*. In it the lines of four are broken into two parts consisting of five and six syllables each. The fifth syllable must rhyme with the eighth syllable of the first line. The last syllable of the first line must also rhyme with the fifth of the second, while the second line's final syllable must rhyme again with the last syllable of the third line, and so on, repeating the internal fifth and eighth syllable pattern as well.

Motherland—Some details were inspired by *Louis XIV et Le Siam* by Dirk van der Cruysse (Silkworm Books, 2002) and *Travels in the Skin Trade* by Jeremy Seabrook (Pluto, 2001). A few phrases from the New Testament also appear.

Three Plays on Display—Section 2: Phrases in quotation marks are adapted from Donna Haraway's, *Primate Visions*, pp 26-7. (Routledge, New York, 1989.)