

Animal Fragments

Starting with the exterior, through an obscene opening, count the many signs within. The extended version incorporates a consumable liquid. A container once filled—oh dear—with microscopic beings. Not delicious because they are invisible. Glass in front of glass. Nothing behind the glass. And what is peeped there. Seen once then never forgotten.

The building housed five kinds of animals, and what is thought to be known about them is printed, in comically enormous text, outside their erstwhile enclosures. The location of their last insurrection, for example. Where they staged their final revolt. So much for the fantasy of 30, 40 years ago. For the dreamers, and preventers of decay, waste, and loss.

She is the prospector. The one proposed to wear, perhaps, a grizzled beard, ruthless scowl, and a crushed and nameless hat. The hat had a title, now misremembered. Not critical.

It was a knack they had for existing that made them so intolerable. Unedited enthusiasm and bona fides—street cred, if you will—that irritated, like a hated song played outside your authority and too many times. Until not hearing becomes a dire act to cause a quitting. Ears crippled after years of the sound of the sound of the sound of significance, not mentioned in any diagnostic list of causes of hearing loss.

And of leaves emerging. A measureless creaking more disconcerting for its complaint than the fact that it manages to persevere.

She views herself for who she is. The apparent flagrant contradiction that you can draw from this is based on a remark that dreams are expressed in images, and that images occur in writing. To test this out, she writes some characters on a chalk board and could just as easily have written hieroglyphs for all their literal value. Making reference to negation against a background of mortal experience. Hiding from questions. Remaining suspended by them.

What does it say. She asks a passing man to interpret. His version is drawn from languages unknown to her, potent first for their indecipherability, then draining. The faltering elation of the Abecedarian who comes to know, then not know, then wanders again in search of toy blocks to recreate his story.

It could be a nightmare. The one with the ho-hum industrial buildings, row upon row of them appearing to roll off a Siberian landscape. The structural equivalent of the musical notation of a Gregorian chant. On the surface there appears to be little to no information to be gleaned, and the dream pulls away as a rolled up screen.

What is longed for is a metaphor, taken down the road a ways and fed a beer. Coinciding exactly where superimposed. To the point most fixed in the distance.

“It began with my mother suddenly wanting something. She wanted to learn, because in learning her lessons as a child she had felt something of herself. Just as when we say, “I feel like myself.” For the first time, a desire, and she didn’t keep it to herself. She spoke of it time and time again, and in the end it became an obsession with her.”

And the mother has performed her ululations. The sounds blurble more than they wail, making her wonder if a shape causes them to be misunderstood.

The animals lived as if no object would ever fall upon them. Objects, after all, have no fore or afterthought, and no plans to arrive at any. They coexisted, the objects and the animals, as in- exactly as you please. A sense of failure never seeped in to stain the edges of their papers with permanent ink, nor bled deeply into the letters of their ordinance. It was as if there could be nothing coming down the pike.

She finds herself muted as a result of perceived intentions. Not merely drained of color but muffled. Her sounds inexact and stretched into oblongs.