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Reflections for August

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NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

The man from Milan cannot sleep,
feels a beast stir inside,
strip the meat from his bones,
marbled buttocks, sinewy thighs.
Soon he staggers
like Lancashire sheep
with the cuddy-trots. His pupils
shrink small as chiggers,
neck cants to the left,
limbs jerk like a marionette,
visions of demon-spawn
bloom in his head. Each night
he sweats buckets of remorse,
pleads with Hypnos
the god of repose, to restore
the ethereal dances of midnight,
the dark-eyed glances
and footsteps through silent valleys—
the bone-yard of dreams. Deep
inside, a perverse origami
is afoot, gerrymandering
citizens from the left and right. Things
fall apart, the handshakes
cannot hold. A blood-dimmed tide
of anarchy is loosed upon his soul,
and he falls through
a labyrinth of holes, through
a distant mirror into a cave
where his ancestors huddle
and suck marrow from their elders' bones.

PLASTINATION

Start with a corpse, the bluish
monogram of *livedo reticularis*
on its flanks. A whiff
of plastic polymer and formalin
in the air. A little man
wearing a black fedora

and the hieroglyphs of grandiosity
cut into his cheeks,
who promises to resurrect
your lover's body, pristine
as Amenhotep,
for a thousand years.
Vacuum the fluids and fat, force feed
the arteries, like a goose
for *foie gras*, with rubber that glows
like neon. Pack the muscles with silicon,
inflate
the blanched nipples. Bisect
the skull to reveal her brain—
a pasha perched
in the minaret of his caliphate—
its ruts and ridges
glossy now,
criss-crossed by veins,
as if, the love she lavished
on you, was still
contained. That little man
will slice thin sections
of her heart, like ham
on a butcher's blade;
a painting framed
to hang in your mausoleum.
Walk between the stainless steel
vats and jars on shelves,
filled with bright remains
from someone's gutted husk.
Ask yourself if Mozart's music
could be any sweeter,
had we, his pauper's body
to gawk at, in a glass case. Ask
the man in the black fedora,
why he seeks immortality,
what blinded him,
in the body's geometry,
to the weightlessness of dust.

Neurology[®]

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Neurology 2011;77;599

DOI 10.1212/WNL.0b013e318228bf50

This information is current as of August 8, 2011

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