

Two Poems by Henry 7. Reneau, Jr: "watch what they mouth say, but listen what they hands do" and "The Book of Hours"



AIR THORNS / *image by Amalie Flynn*

**watch what they mouth say, but listen
what they hands do**

i grew up hearing certain accents
& vocabularies
& speech patterns
that were the aural essence of *Home*

or the audible signal of danger: the feral howl
of incarceration, or the sudden voicelessness
of the morgue,
that makes *Home* a muted whisper of fear,
or pain that is slow to change, that is now, & how
it's always been, a metaphor's promise
of how it ought to be: trying to reach the next world
with a spoon;

(*thrust*
lever lift toss.)

my life, a soundtrack of false platitudes
flattering the air of thorns about my ears,
continually looping a distorted truth,
a disabled symbolism for freedom,
like a gimp
would drag the weight of her body,
to exist
with a deleted allotment of common sense,
blind, cripple & crazy as
drowning in silence. we hear nothing,
but the clean crack of hearts breaking,
& the accepted ruin
of *matters of fact*. Repetition
like a shovel searching out the truth;

(*thrust lever*
lift toss.)

a soundtrack now, looping
funeral dirges of national carrion eagles &
securitized oil, the official government
propaganda: an Oscar worthy suspension of disbelief
patriotic cheering the murder of bin Laden,
that goes viral & seals a book deal,
& movie credits, for Seal Team 6;

(*thrust lever lift toss.*)

The Book of Hours

The sun sets on enhanced interrogation,
even as it rose, exponentially, on drone strikes,
like the sum of collateral damage
became a euphemism, beyond our peripheral
vision, & we held the shining black eye
of history in our mouth, as if
we imagined God in our every breath, as if we
are, all of us, alone in the complicity of others.