

Nina Rubinstein Alonso – Five Poems



Featured Poet

Another List of Dead Names

Mug shot of a twenty-one year old
racist bastard with shaggy blond hair
who killed nine black souls
singing psalms in Charleston

another white idiot shot
eleven Jews in a Pittsburgh temple
no words bad enough ugly enough
for crazed stupidity of blood hate

breath has no color
human hands lift coffins
torn hearts read
another list of dead name

Toe of my boot

Gilded fields of emptiness
with sibilant green trees

but the toe of my boot
sends noisy signals
beeps from some half-submerged

radio station mixing
guitars with flutes

with voices shouting
raucous languages
laughing about something

I shake my foot
tell it to shut up

stop spoiling
calm grassy acres
with stupid noise

but can't make it stop
in fact it's louder

insisting I give attention to
whatever I'm trying
to submerge to forget

to bury so hard and deep
it will never rise again.

Survive Surviving

Stalks cracked and shredded
salt stifling silent fields
sodden failure to bloom

bones snapped roots ripped up
twinges of movement stifled
crushed marrow can't breathe

hate's blindness hate's power
hate's energy pushing blood evil
atrocities bears witness

struggling to lift broken souls
maddened by violence
searching strength in Jewish scars

raked raw across the heart
nothing stops rising waters
each night my river brims

mute blackness trying
to soothe pain of those who
who can't survive surviving.

Taking Selfies by the Mona Lisa

Tourists pose grinning by the Mona Lisa
flash bouncing off Da Vinci veiled by protective glass

light-shocked lady of sorrows can't blink can't
accuse mortals on their way to the next room

maybe Caravaggio or the Winged Victory but
I'm thinking Charlie Chaplin in Modern Times

workers rolling upside down on cog wheels
coiled humans trapped by spiraling machines

how many multiplied snapshot clicks does it take
to give me a headache while I search the cafeteria's

planchette of snacks for something to eat
scan Michelin sip my modest cup of wine

but can't take Louvre off my list as I saw
marble Diana pull an arrow from her quiver

take aim considering which target of violation
to attack but what does seeing mean vibration

from ancient images beyond translation or comprehension
huntress Diana winging arrows at miscreants

though I didn't steal a selfie with Mona Lisa
at least I didn't do that.

Penis Sheath

Who else
would gift me
a penis sheath
brown snake-like

curving gourd
with a woven
zig-zag straw border
and brown string

wrapping narrow hips
of a naked man

in Papua-New Guinea
only Heather

though I wonder
whether by now
it's a museum artifact
unclear whether tribal

essence still breathes except
as ancient ceremony for
curious tourists
clicking phones.

Nina Rubinstein Alonso's work appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Ploughshares*, *Bagel Bards*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Cambridge Artists' Cooperative*, *Wilderness House Review*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *MomEgg*, *U. Mass. Review*, *Constant Remembrance*, *Southern Women's Review*, *Tears and Laughter*, *Peacock Literary Review*, *Broadkill Review*, *Black Poppy Review*, etc. Her poem "Gender Veils" was awarded the 12th National Prize by Writing in a Woman's Voice, David Godine Press published her book *This Body*, and *Riot Wake* is upcoming from Cervena Barva Press.