

“Who Vanishes As He Approaches,”
- Ted Hughes

Today the last black rhino
vanishes as he approaches,
his horn cocked, dying in spite
of his bodyguards, only human
like the poachers who hunt him
while shopping for essentials:

food, medicine, permanent erections.

We hope he expires on his
back, looking up - the rapture,
the stars within his reach.

We also assume what we call
the missionary position, human
animals, sunny side up, staring
at celestial maps from rooms
with skylights and NO EXIT signs
over the doors, no way out as in
rooms marked, kids, adolescents,
adults, or MIND THE GAP, the
shade where rhinos wallowed in
mud and albino children, allergic
to light, trembled in fear of holy

men with machetes.

This room has a neon sign that means
EXTINCT. It's rarely crowded, only in
times of cholera, ebola, war. Usually, the
lines move quickly, just like Disneyland
and the tourist attractions at Auschwitz.

Look up. Look way, way up.

Some of us lie on our backs and
sing from the hymn books we were
taught to trust - praise for treble-
voiced women, pre-fab, already
shaped like seraphim - and trumpet
our bangles in cumulous gratitude,
for Heaven at the end of the yellow
brick road and the grass savanna,

Hell for the ones we leave behind.

LINDA ROGERS