

Goya's Missing Skull

We never found it.
We never found them.

A polished mantelpiece, void of phrenology, absent its memento mori,
the rainbow-colored orbs in the pit at McDonald's PlayPlace

before Trayvon, before Tyre with his BB gun, before Gettysburg's opening volley
of cannon balls—bowling balls, Lebowski, Nam, M16s, magazines, Columbine,

a mallet-struck goat's head flicked across nomadic pastures,
stones and soccer balls skittering, blood-rust soil at Ghazi Stadium,

a sphere anchoring a sunken raft, an ovoid repast for fish
trawling the enticing edge of the undertow at Lesbos,

Mr. Kurtz's ivory globe—balanced in her ebony palm, the pilgrims squirting
pellets of lead, their Winchesters at their hips, he, almost dead,

Humpty Dumpty, the disembodied face of Oz, the Cheshire Cat
a floating smile reciting our most fearful nursery rhyme,

a crater in Homs, shaped like a cranium, where once lips kissed,
sipped laughter, cardamom coffee, orange-blossom water.

Nations decapitated, hurtling IEDs, the bunker buster Madar-e Bamb-Ha,
a blue marble spinning desolate in its intelligent universe,

the head still unaccounted for, the journalist from our close-knit hometown,
pinging date stones and olive pips, along with the others doomed,

a game of Risk to retrieve the world, a skein of dream-wool
saved for his sweater, wound tightly in a ball . . . disappeared

from Diane's worry basket of nights and days.
Poor Yorick's capital remains, sans soliloquy.

These were men, these were boys. These were women, these were girls
—their skirts twirled faster than dervishes, forming circles,

answering the grave-robbled past in the present tense, forever questioning.
We knew them. We trusted what went round-and-round inside their brains,

their senses sharpened, their voices battering Saturno,
his god-mad envy of his progeny. As gone as what cradled Goya's mind.

These are the time capsules we seek to find—swallowed into earth, sand, sea,
Munch's enigma, framing the letter O about to sound in silent mimicry.

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