

Burning at Pashupatti

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They bathe in the body's sparks,
smell of burnt flesh. Here, everyone licks
fingers, collects the ash of their mothers.
Elegance is lost in the charred hand
escaping the bonfire. Skewered pork, pigment eyes.

Cinders glow, float lazily to the sky
like third-world disco balls for the boys
below the body. Gyrating knees roll water,
shit tattoos thighs. The ghat's smoke chokes the world
as monkeys praise each other with howls.
Love is the flea removed from fur.

Stern in his flexing beauty,
a monk churns ash until flames
shower the shaved heads of mourners.
Wanting remembrance, boys open mouths,
cup hands to catch loss.

Nothing can be dry on the Bagmahti.
Along the bank, holy-men rock
curled in wrinkled skin. Trancelike,
they twist, stretch leathery legs over
heads toward pierced ears. Intently,
they watch the surface roll as if the
blackened sermons could, at any
moment, burst from the water,
glorious, in flame.