

THE HAUNTING VOICE: CONNECTIONS THROUGH TIME & SPACE

A partly common language exists to which strangers can bring their own heartbeat, memories, images. A language that itself has learned from the heartbeat, memories, images of strangers.

Adrienne Rich

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

I Oh Galuppi, Baldassarò, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

II Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the kings,
Where Saint Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

III Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

IV Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

V Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red, —
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head?

VI Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

VII What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions—"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might last! we can but try!

VIII "Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still as happy?"—"Yes. And you?"
—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did I stop them, when a million seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

IX So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
"I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!"

X Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

XI But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep thro' every nerve.

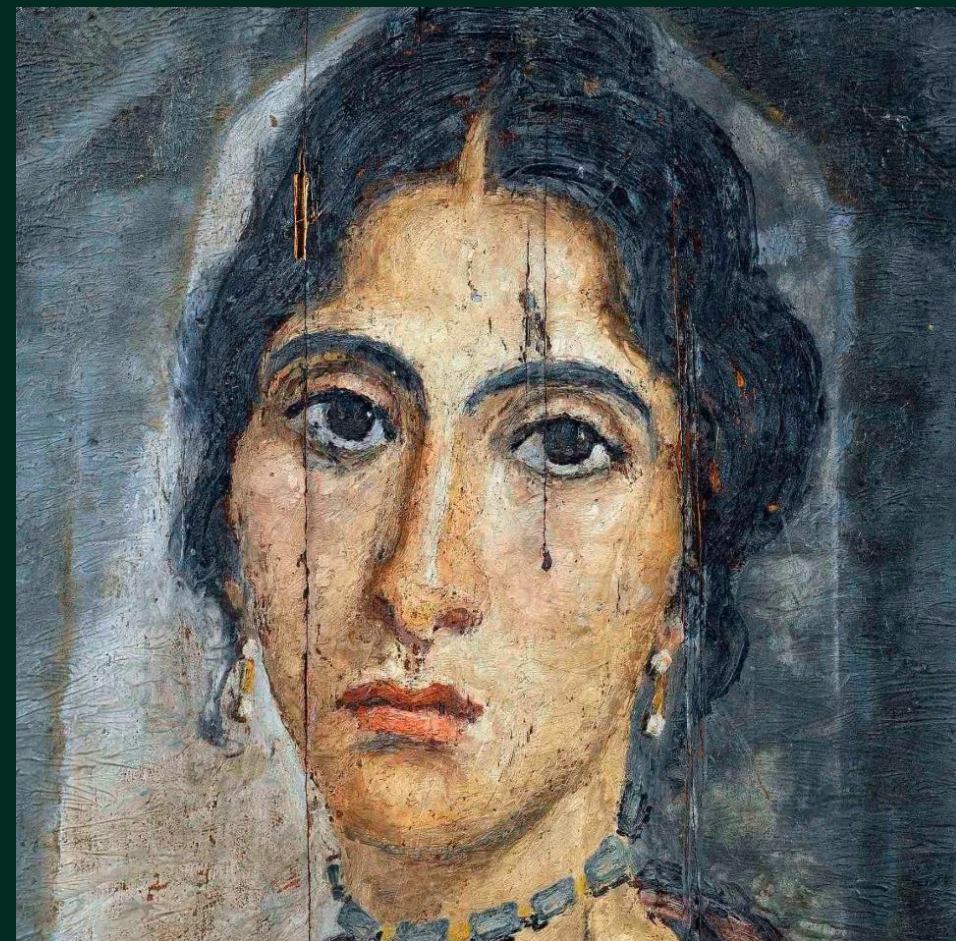
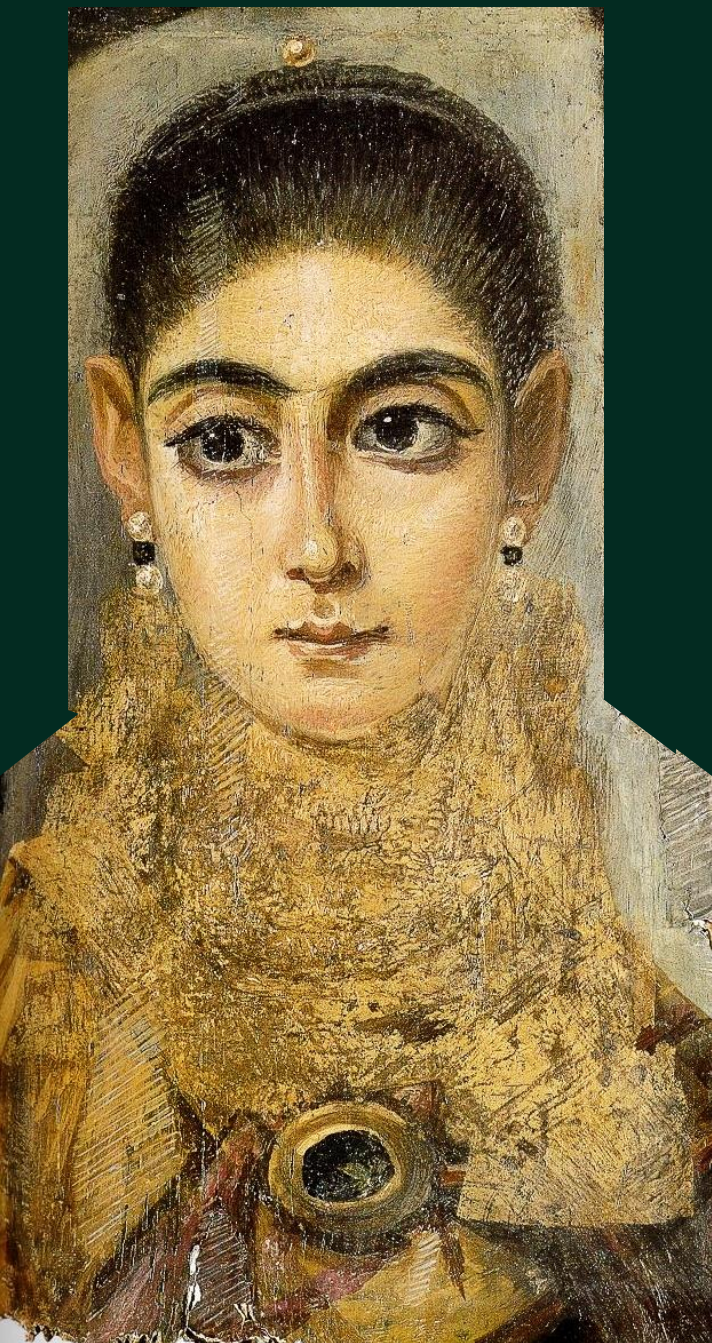
XII Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned:
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned.
"The soul, doubtless, is immortal — where a soul can be discerned.

XIII "Yours for instance: you know physics, something of geology,
"Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
"Butterflies may dread extinction, — you'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV "As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
"Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
"What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

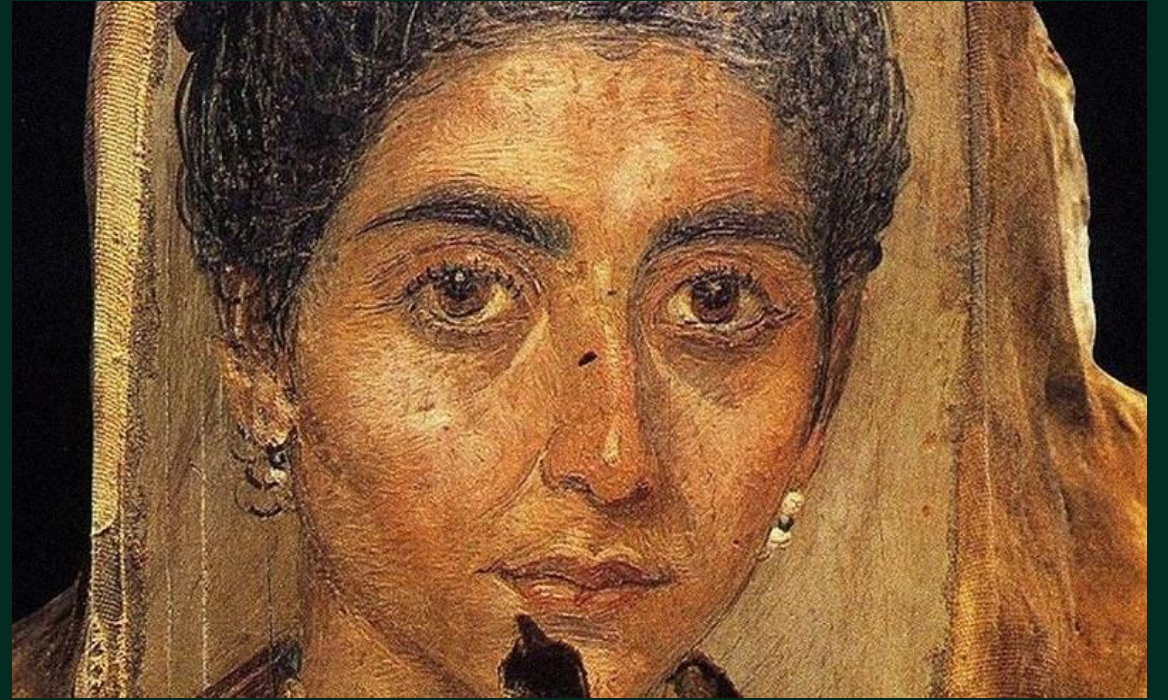
XV "Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too — what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old

Robert Browning



Al Fayyum funerary
portraits, 2,000 years old

IMAGES OF LIFE ATTACHED TO THE
MUMMIFIED CORPSE



Al Fayyum portraits, 2,000 years old

HISTORY

Into whose ear the deeds are spoken. The only
listener. So I believed
he would remember everything, the murmuring trees,
the sunshine's zealotry, its deep
unevenness. For history
is the opposite
of the eye
for whom, for instance, six million bodies in portions
of hundreds and
the flowerpots broken by a sudden wind stand as
equivalent. What more
is there
than fact? I'll give ten thousand dollars to the man
who proves the holocaust really
occurred said the exhausted solitude
in San Francisco
in 1980. Far in the woods
in a faded photograph

in 1942 the man with his own
genitalia in his mouth and hundreds of
slow holes
a pitchfork has opened
over his face
grows beautiful. The ferns and deepwood
lilies catch
the eye. Three men in ragged uniforms
with guns keep laughing
nervously. They share the day
with him. A bluebird
sings. The feathers of the shade touch every inch
of skin--the hand holding down the delicate gun,
the hands holding down the delicate
hips. And the sky
is visible between the men, between
the trees, a blue spirit
enveloping
anything. Late in the story, in northern Italy,
a man cuts down some trees for winter
fuel. We read this in the evening

news. Watching the fire burn late
one night, watching it change and change, a hand
grenade,
lodged in the pulp the young tree
grew around, explodes, blinding the man, killing
his wife. Now who
will tell the children
fairy-tales? The ones where simple
crumbs over the forest
floor endure
to help us home?

*From The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems
1971-1994 by Jorie Graham. Ecco, 1995*



In Europe the desiccation and preservation of corpses is a particularly Sicilian affair. There are other examples in Italy, but the great majority are in Sicily, where the relationship between the living and the dead is especially strong

Nobody knows how many there really are, or how many have since been removed from catacombs and buried in cemeteries by priests uneasy with the theology of keeping votive corpses. The phenomenon provokes an instant question: Why would anyone do this? Why would you exhibit decaying bodies?

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2009/02/sicily-crypts/#/MM7684_080421_4325.jpg





https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2009/02/sicily-crypts/#/MM7684_080421_4325.jpg



THIS LIVING HAND, NOW WARM AND CAPABLE

This living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calm'd—see here it is—
I hold it towards you.

John Keats

Camera Lucida, however, ...not so much a knowing application of semiotic methods to intimate experience as a search for the aspect of experience that evaded study or critique. In short, it was a book about love and grief, written directly out of the loss of his mother in 1977, and shadowed by the "mourning diary" (published last year in France) that he had begun to keep after her death. Barthes had composed a ghost story of sorts, in which neither Henriette Barthes nor the book's ostensible subject, photography, could quite be grasped.

Camera Lucida is a distinctly odd volume to have attained, in the 30 years since its publication, such a canonical place in the study of photography. As the scholar Geoffrey Batchen points out in *Photography Degree Zero*, a recent collection of essays about Barthes's text, it is probably the most widely read and influential book on the subject. But the nature of that influence remains obscure – what exactly does one learn from *Camera Lucida*? Barthes certainly shrinks from being comprehensive; he has no interest in the techniques of photography, in arguments over its status as art, nor really in its role in contemporary media or culture, which he leaves to sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu. He is allergic to cleverness in photography (much of Henri Cartier-Bresson would surely qualify), disparages colour (in the era of William Eggleston, no less) as always looking as if it's been added later, and calls himself a realist at exactly the moment when postmodernist artists and critics were declaring the image a performance or sham. Worse, he risks this sort of aphoristic provocation: "in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes."

Brian Dillon, Review of *Camera Lucida*, *Guardian*

What, then, was Barthes looking for when he looked at photographs? In the first half of the book, he elaborates a distinction between two planes of the image. The first, which he calls the *studium*, is the manifest subject, meaning and context of the photograph: everything that belongs to history, culture, even to art. "The *studium* is a kind of education," he writes. It's here that we learn, say, about Moscow in a William Klein street photograph from 1959, or about the comportment of a well-dressed African-American family in a 1926 picture by James Van Der Zee. But it's the second category that really skewers Barthes's sensibility. He calls it the *punctum*: that aspect (often a detail) of a photograph that holds our gaze without condescending to mere meaning or beauty. In the same Van Der Zee photograph, the punctum is one woman's strapped pumps, though it later shifts, as the image "works" on the author, to her gold necklace. This is one of a few curious moments in the book where Barthes blatantly misreads the image at hand; the woman is actually wearing a string of pearls. But his point survives: he has been indelibly touched by the poignant detail.

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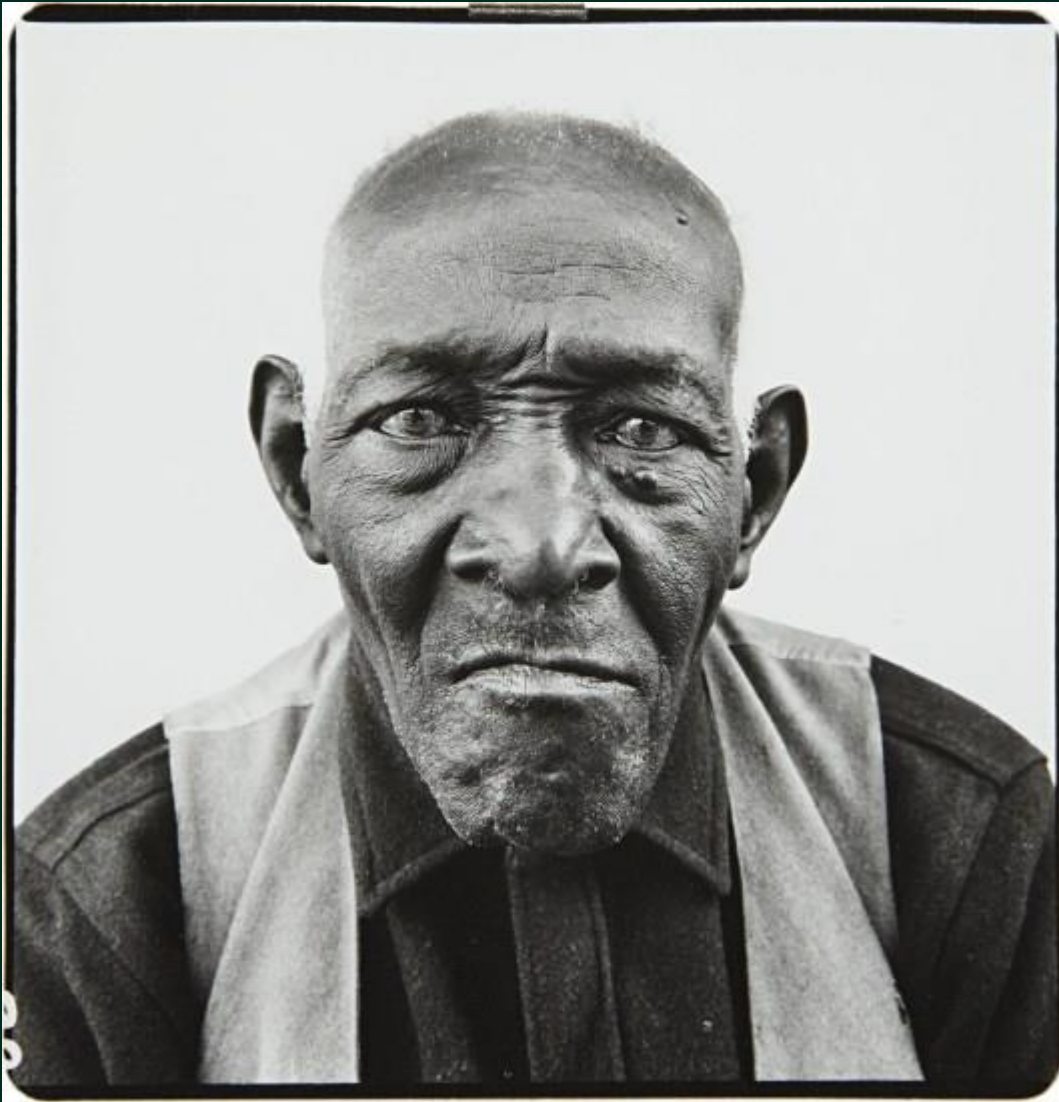
Artists such as Gerhard Richter, Christian Boltanski, Tacita Dean and Fiona Tan have all amassed archives of everyday portraits that owe much of their allure to Barthes's "imperious sign of my future death". In fiction, WG Sebald admitted a profound debt to *Camera Lucida*; in *Austerlitz*, the protagonist's search for an image of his lost mother is clearly modelled on Barthes's desire for a glimpse of "the unique being".

[t]he ultimate effect of punctum is the intimation of death. This Barthes realizes in the personal context of his bereavement over the still recent death of his mother; looking at a portrait of her as a young girl (a picture he declines to reproduce in *Camera Lucida*), he sees that her death implies his own. From this he arrives at the broad conclusion that every photograph contains the sign of his death, and that the essence of photography is the implied message: "That has been." It is no coincidence that Barthes is given to quoting Proust; Proust's obsession with memory is Barthes's obsession with death. Proust's immense powers of recall embody all that Barthes hopes to extract from a photograph but which, intractably, the photograph refuses to yield.

Andy Grundberg (1981) 'Death In The Photograph' NYT Review of
Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida Reflections on Photography*
<https://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/23/books/death-in-the-photograph.html>

"Life is a movie. Death is a photograph," Susan Sontag

BARTHES



Photography cannot signify (aim at a generality) except by assuming a mask. It is this word which Calvino correctly uses to designate what makes a face into the product of a society and of its history. As in the portrait of William Casby, photographed by Avedon: the essence of slavery is here laid bare: the mask is the meaning, insofar as it is absolutely pure. [p34]

Richard Avedon, 'William Casby, born in Slavery'
Algiers, Louisiana, 1963

BARTHES

Photography seems to me closer to the Theatre , it is by way of a singular intermediary and perhaps I am the only one who sees it : by way of death. We know the original **relation of the Theatre and the cult of the dead**: the first actors separated themselves from the community by playing the role of the dead: to make oneself up was his designate oneself as a body simultaneously living and dead: the white and bust of the totemic Theatre, the man with the painted face in the Chinese Theatre , the rice-paste make up of the Indian Kathakali, the Japanese No mask... Now it is the same relation which I find in the photograph; However life like we strive to make it and this frenzy to Be life like can only be I will mythic denial of an apprehension of death photography is a kind of primitive Theatre a kind of *Tableau Vivant* a figuration of the motionless and made up face beneath which we see the dead. [pp.31-2]

VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHS OF AND WITH THE DEAD



a kind of primitive Theatre a kind of *Tableau Vivant*
a figuration of the motionless and made up face
beneath which we see the dead.



BARTHES

The photograph ... represents that very subtle moment when, to tell the truth, **I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object** : I then experience a micro version of death of parenthesis : I am truly becoming a spectre. The photographer knows this very well , and himself fears... This death in which his gesture will embalm me. [...] The (terrified) photographer must exert himself to the utmost to keep the photograph from becoming death. But I - already an object, I do not struggle. ... what I see is that I have become a total-image, which is to say, death in person; **Others - the other - do not dispossess me of myself, they turn me, ferociously, into an object , they put me at their mercy, at their disposal, classified in a file, ready for the subtlest deceptions**

As spectator I was interested in photography only for sentimental reasons; I wanted to explore it not as a question a theme but **as a wound: I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think** [p.22]



Others - the other - do not dispossess me of myself, they turn me, ferociously, into an object ,

BARTHES

...we say 'to develop a photograph' but what the chemical action develops is undevelopable , an essence (of a wound), what cannot be transformed but only repeated under the instances of insistence)of the insistent gaze) . This brings the photograph certain photographs close to the Haiku . For the notation of a haiku, too, is undevelopable : everything is given, without provoking the desire for or even possibly ability of a rhetorical expansion . In both cases we might we must speak of an *intense immobility*: linked to a detail (to a detonator) , an explosion makes a little star on the pane of the text or of the photograph: neither the haiku nor the photograph makes us dream.

READING & DISCUSSION OF WORK

Teju Cole, 'In Dark Times, I Sought Out the Turmoil of Caravaggio's Paintings'



In the late afternoon, Alessandra and I went to the Museo Regionale di Messina, a simple building on a rise near the strait that separates Sicily from the mainland. There were trees and marble antiques scattered about its grounds. We were visiting on a Wednesday afternoon, and almost no one was there at all. We felt fortunate as we moved through the silent galleries. Stepping into a large gray room, without fanfare or warning I found myself standing before “The Raising of Lazarus.” *It hit me like a sudden gust of wind. I don’t know if I cried out, but I know I began to shake.* I approached it, making sense of it as I moved closer — a harshly lit, frightening picture, an entanglement of limbs, some as yet unresolved drama — and as I did so, I saw that there was a second painting in the room, also by Caravaggio: his “Adoration of the Shepherds.” This was a quieter work, but it was also large and had its own force field.

‘In Dark Times, I Sought Out the Turmoil of Caravaggio’s Paintings’ Teju Cole

I sat on a bench in the middle of the room, the two paintings set at a right angle to each other. I was awe-struck, out of breath, caught between these two immensities. The very act of looking at an old painting can be so strange. It is an activity that is often bound up with class identity or social aspiration. It can sometimes feel like a diverting, or irritating, stroll among white people’s ancestors. It can also often be wonderful, giving the viewer a chance to be blessed by a stranger’s ingenuity or insight. But rarely, something even better happens: A painting made by someone in a distant country hundreds of years ago, an artist’s careful attention and turbulent experience sedimented onto a stretched canvas, leaps out of the past to call you — to call *you* — to attention in the present, to drive you to confusion by drawing from you both a sense of alarm and a feeling of consolation, to bring you to an awareness of your own self in the act of experiencing something that is well beyond the grasp of language, something that you wouldn’t wish to live without.





BUCHANWALD, (1890)

POEM: JORIE GRAHAM
TWO PAINTINGS BY GUSTAV KLIMT



PORTRAIT OF ADELE BLOCH-BAUER I, (1907)

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54721/two-paintings-by-gustav-klimt>

TWO PAINTINGS BY GUSTAV KLIMT

Although what glitters
 on the trees,
row after perfect row,
 is merely
the injustice
 of the world,

the chips on the bark of each
 beech tree
catching the light, the sum
 of these delays
is the beautiful, the human
 beautiful,
body of flaws.

 The dead
would give anything
 I'm sure,
to step again onto
 the leafrot,
into the avenue of mottled shadows,
 the speckled
broken skins. The dead

 in their sheer
open parenthesis, what they
 wouldn't give

for something to lean on
 that won't
give way. I think I
 would weep
for the moral nature
 of this world,

for right and wrong like pools
 of shadow
and light you can step in
 and out of
crossing this yellow beech forest,
 this buchen-wald,

one autumn afternoon, late
 in the twentieth
century, in hollow light,
 in gaseous light. . . .
To receive the light
 and return it

and stand in rows, anonymous,
 is a sweet secret
even the air wishes
 it could unlock.
See how it pokes at them
 in little hooks,

the blue air, the yellow trees.
 Why be afraid?
They say when Klimt
 died suddenly
a painting, still
 incomplete,

was found in his studio,
 a woman's body
open at its point of
 entry,
rendered in graphic,
 pornographic,

detail—something like
 a scream
between her legs. Slowly,

feathery,
he had begun to paint
 a delicate

garment (his trademark)
 over this mouth
of her body. The mouth
 of her face
is genteel, bored, feigning a need
 for sleep. The fabric

defines the surface,
 the story,
so we are drawn to it,
 its blues
and yellows glittering
 like a stand

of beech trees late
 one afternoon
in Germany, in fall.
 It is called
Buchenwald, it is
 1890. In

the finished painting
 the argument
has something to do
 with pleasure.



Maliwawa Figures: Ancient Aboriginal art 'unlike anything seen before' 6-9,000 years old

READINGS & DISCUSSION TASK

THE HAUNTING VOICE/ SUMMONING THE DEAD

Draw on one or more of the images and poems on this powerpoint to create a narrative or a voice

(aim for c 500 words but the number is not centrally important as you will be editing it later.)