

Creature Pressure

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I.

Dear God, if I have to live
at least let me not forever have to see
in my mind's eye (nor ever once in the actual flesh
as on TV) the likes of this furred familiar, hauled
by neckchain, eyeballed there in the circle
in the public square, this

one miserable monkey, made alert
by a yanked leash toward a keeper's knife.
Full of riveted misgiving, there he has to meet his maker.

First he's nicked at the neck—and must emit
a cry so bystanders can tell
how sharp the situation really is.
But that's just foreplay, because then the knife-arm does

a three-foot thrust directly at the creature's gut—
the beast recoils, of course, then has to freeze in that
unthinkable contortion (with neck still caught up close
to his tormentor's gaze). They stay
like that, for just a while, so we'll
believe our eyes.

The monkey's quivering. As long as he is quick he'll have
to do another show. (The moment he is slow—
no sweat. Another monkey can be bought.)

And people crane to see, not necessarily
because they're cruel—perhaps even because they're not—
they do avert their gazes, now and then,
only to gawk again. Eventually the monkey is allowed

to pass a hat. (Those who have cried
give extra. That's the pure
perverseness of the plan.) It seems
despite it all, I'm not

allowed to stab the man.

II.

Alone or no, alas,
it's not all one to me.
Three was unbearable.

Autocracy or nunnery—but not
the kaffe-klatsch. I fur the drawing room against
the artsy semblances, and rear no kin. And there
in the spyglass, such a relief,

that swatch of car-ferry departing
with its log-books, watchwords, flap
of merry old souls and border cop—and
yes! I see them too, the panting sidekicks,
pets on vacation, rhinestones at their gullets...

Fare thee well, mankind! Godspeed! Chop-chop!