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Over Coffee

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OVER COFFEE

What you mean to say about the film is that
it moved you, the woman alone at the end
beside a burning field of cane, her brother
carried off in a covered truck to be tortured/
shot. That you're not sure but think
it wasn't about politics but bedrooms
and kitchens, hands and eyes, the light of dusk
because it stops us on the stairs and makes us
bless a child earnestly chiding her doll
or cherish a crow lifting from an oak, charcoal
smearing blue, when we feel tender and vast
and brittle because the emotions which are hybrids
of anguish and elation are the mediums for spirits
binding to flesh. But your husband and friends,
up on genres and the lineage of dictators,
wielding jargon like the clipped
phrases of birds who know what the trills signify,
speak of fads, Marxist insinuations,
the opening scene's allegory of whore as El Salvador,
fought over, pierced, beaten by men. They travel
staunchly in the other direction, away from sentiment,
from the image of the woman on her knees
at the edge of a field turning orange, into history,
they abandon the facts of smoke, the muslin dress
given by her husband, her stare as the truck
zippers-up horizon, gets lost in the distance
with its appetite for souls. By the time
they ask your opinion you don't want to talk,
knowing faith dissipates through words,
sure you'll passionately refer to our indebtedness
to memory, suggest that by imagining
the vanished flower, repeating the name
of the lost cat, we retain our lives, webbed
by what we've touched and needed,
the persistence of love despite death an act

of vengeance, a refusal to diminish, you'll swear
the film was about the failure of every goodbye.
All of this you try not to say but do in a clumsy rush
as if the words are falling down, then a pause,
the surrounding chatter coming in like the slurrings
of waves as you hold your breath on a sea-wall,
then the shift, their eyes dilating in recognition
of conviction, finally the stammers, the rush to be
the first to address this exhilarating stranger.