MY TRANQUIL WAR
AND OTHER POEMS

ANIS SHIVANI
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The zero seconds in the pulses animating Goya's *Third of May* have ceased: it is how we hood the crimes of the past, how we steal from classical conceptions of pathos, irrefutably current. *Guernica* doesn't do this justice. Nor Milgram's prison experiments. Something about the dark solitaries crowding the ghost-rooms of the imperium, something about the thumbs-ups, the wide grins, the signal-choked embraces of the iced detainee, the textbook postures (wires trailing from genitals), is beyond instant recall, even if familiar like the hair on our wrists: we find this night slit open like our favorite poet's suicide, anomaly piling on anomaly, making us afraid of shadows, which linger inside these doors. And the benign names—stress position, sensory deprivation, "fear up," "ego down," "futility"—deprive us of rational bearings: it is how we viewed the barbed wires of our fortress cities from the distance of fiction. I hear in the pyramids of naked men, piled in easy symmetry, the accordion of religious zeal: finally the equality of sexes, the equalization of man and beast, the erasure of borderlines, we have been seeking since Luther nailed his theses, heralding the climax of eros.
I Watched Executions Last Night with My Sister

The football field, where I used to cheer as a twelve-year-old, had been prepared to accept the deaths of forty murderous men, whose souls we witnessed exiting with the ease of needles running out of thread. It was like kicking in the style of Pelé and getting only the goal post on your bloody shin, and falling twisted and embarrassed to the ground, your playmates laughing over your sundered body, screaming: he is just like his sister, Daud pees sitting down like his sister.
To Djuna Barnes, on *Nightwood*

At last I see your aesthetic quarry:
to trump the flood of lewd words O’Connor’s
watery-grave mouth leaks, after horrors
we spawn as if the state were our glory.
I see how Nora’s fealty is treason.
I see how Robin bowing to the dog
in the last hours of the blunt monologue
evokes the return of the dead season.
Djuna, are you vanquished, do you now laugh?
Women have chosen swords over deaf words,
dictators have unpaid armies for staff,
Guido the idiot self we kill in thirds.
They read you then as warbler of passion.
They thought you a fad, a passing fashion.