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From THE OCHRE WORLD

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Meanwhile, in Juarez. In South L.A. Harlem. The Bronx. Meanwhile, in the alleys of D.C. Beirut. Nepal. *Meanwhile: The terror of that word.* When the soldier sodomized the twelve year old girl, she thought he'd shoved a bayonet up inside her and that she was dying. *It's spring, and the girls are decorating the neighbor's dog with ribbons.* On the streets of L.A., two black men dragged a white truck driver onto the pavement and kicked and beat him, cracking his skull. *The irises in bloom—so delicate, almost erotic.* Because he was albino and because the legends held he was bewitched, the young warriors took him into the mountains, beheaded him and cut off his fingertips. *When the beginning poet wrote "blue sky caresses the mesa," the professor "bristled."* The tattooed dwarf, wearing a cutoff denim jacket, wandered among the five year old girls at the mall. *In the morning, my daughter, waking from the land of dreams where everything is in question, insists that we call her "Grayce." No pet names, no endearments—just Grayce.* In Monet's version La Grenouillere, suffering is off the canvas, not to be found among the bathers, the islanded forms. Even the man walking the narrow plank is poised, steady; he has *all the time in the world.* Even the dark boats that deliver our gaze to the man on the plank do not contain the blindfolded, mutilated bodies. Do not contain Picasso's *Vollard*, a man so invaded by geometry, so riddled by the angular vicissitudes of 1910, that his contemplative pose has become demonic. He no longer thinks Great and Noble Thoughts; he presides dispassionately over the fire in his lap.

In one theory of dreaming, the brain generates images randomly and a "story-making" region tries to "make sense" of them, "using" its innate or culturally-developed sense of causality and story to protect "us" from meaninglessness. In this theory two men arrive in an ochre world, two anonymous men arrive unbidden, and the dreamer, a kind of author, invents their lives, animates them, "informs" them. What this means—*clubs raised, in black and white, the time blinking in the cor-*

ner—what this means, then, and this is the source of our error, is that there are countless stories being generated, countless versions. Such terror and beauty, such a struggle for language and power.

The lilies shimmer in a slight breeze, their silvery leaves form a visual glissando. And Rodney King, a "black man," an "Afro-American," a "Gorilla in the Mist," who was struck 56 times by police billy clubs in Los Angeles, stands before the cameras, nearly sobbing, and asks for an end to the violence. The girls, only five years old, thought the dwarfed man was cute; therein lay the source of the fear, therein lay the fathers' terror. "Blue sky. The mesa." Caress, the professor insisted, when deployed in this sentence, creates a hackneyed, sentimental image. The sky cares nothing for the mesa. The sky and the mesa care nothing for you. Okay, then, said the student: "The blue sky tore at the mesa's throat." Much better, said the professor. Much, much better.