

The Killing Fields of Uganda

In the lovely green fields of Uganda
the children flock like lambs,
gambol over discarded car springs,
pangas once used to crack skulls.

It doesn't matter who cracks the whip now —
Milton Abote, Idi Amin Dada —
the syllables of the rulers' names
are still as the stones on their tongues.

They are white now. White enough
that we in the West can look at them
and wonder where the yellow went,
if they brushed their teeth with Pepsodent.

So white we can pick them up
like seashells on a pleasant beach at home,
or hold them by their hollow orbits
and admire them like *objets d'art* —

expensive vases say. Even admire
their heft and weight the way
we admire a new bowling ball,
the way it travels down a lane.

So white they don't need to ask for foreign aid,
but merely whisper of the wind
that tousles the tall green grass around them,
say the old queen's name in the ripples on her lake.

So white even the black museum curators at Makindye
gather their bones like firewood of ancient days
and stack their skulls like cannon balls
outside the former Research Bureau in Kampala.

So white and free of skin and tendon
they smile like the thwacked slice in a golfball
and travel twice as far when the right
angle of iron addresses them.

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