

Postcards From Cambodia

Bruce Cockburn

Abe Lincoln once turned to somebody and said:
Do you ever find yourself talking with the dead?
There are three tiny deaths heads carved out of mammoth tusk
on the ledge in my bathroom.
They grin at me in the morning when Im taking a leak,
but they say very little.
Outside Phnom Penh theres a tower, glass-pannelled,
maybe ten meters high,
filled with skulls from the killing fields.
Most of them lack the lower jaw
so they dont exactly grin,
but they whisper, as if from a great distance,
of pain, and of pain left far behind
Eighteen thousand empty eyeholes peering out at the four direct
ions
Electric fly buzz green moist breeze
Bonecoloured Brahma bull grazes wet eyed, (gazes??)
hobbled in hollow of mass grave
In the neighbouring field a small herd
of young boys plays soccer,
their laughter swallowed in expanding silence.
This is too big for anger,
its too big for blame.
We stumble through history so
humanly lame
So I bow down my head
Say a prayer for us all
That we dont fear the spirit
when it comes to call
Sun will soon slide down into the far end of the ancient reserv
oir.
Orange ball merging with its water-borne twin
below airbrushed edges of cloud.
But first it spreads itself,
a golden scrim behind fractal sweep of swooping flycatchers.
Silhouetted dark green trees,
Blue horizon.
The rains are late this year.
The sky has no more tears to shed.
But from the air Cambodia remains
a disc of wet green, bordered by bright haze.
Water-filled bomb craters sunstreak gleam
stitched in strings across patchwork land
march west toward the far hills of Thailand.
Macro analog of Angkor Wats temple walls