

## Empathy for Fat Elvis and Notes Toward the Impeachment of Dread

1.

Thing is, you have to conjure Elvis,  
the dirt-poor kid from Mississippi  
who sucked up gospel, country and blues  
till he bled them, a bruised-eyed boy  
with blistering talent and near-giddy energy,  
and certainly not the sad man  
of bizarrely elongated collars, peanut butter and bacon sandwiches,  
and don't even get me started  
on the cape.

Of course he had no idea he'd usher in  
one of the goofiest eras of human god worship  
ever known to our species. He couldn't see ahead to the look-alikes,  
no inkling he'd be studied  
in university courses  
as a Distantly Emergent  
Posthuman Cultural Artifact.

(In death, of course, he's all proto-metamodern  
Jesus  
coming soon  
to a dying planet near you).

Anyway.

When the King sings the Dixie trilogy, very very late,  
when he's the Elvis no one voted for,  
the Elvis who never made it onto a stamp—

you believe him. That song is way  
too sad as he intermittently and obliquely  
apologizes for his bloated drugginess,  
unseemly giggling when he forgets the lines.  
He is mourning his own  
and everyone's golden beginnings,  
even as he sees his own ignominious  
and nightmarish end  
clearly coming down the pike.

You can hear it in his voice, those final shows.  
He was preparing.

2.

I've heard it said that to live a good life  
you must be ready to die a good death;  
in fact your life should be spent  
getting ready to die.

Sounds pretty godawful, yes?  
My own dread shoots through the roof.

But I know that Tibetan adepts, for one, flat-out practice.  
Right down to the instant  
of letting go. They are always letting go. They spend half the day unclasping.  
They are completely aligned in life  
with death, and yet more alive than the rest of us  
because focused and clear and still.

In meditation they feel cool air actually warm  
in the mouth, all the way down the throat and into the lungs,  
and back out. They observe every thought  
precisely when a thought  
emerges like a slow liquid arrow and crosses through  
and out of the mind, and they do not cling  
to a self. To a story. Certainly not  
to some retrievable, gold-plated past.

(Please do not cry to go there.  
It is both a sentimental  
and fascist delusion.)

And some adepts die sitting up. Cessation  
is ambiguous; the flesh does not even degrade. Tap  
a monk's corpse and it bursts into—what? Conceptionless  
nonpermanence. Rigpa shunyata dharmadatu, so many damned  
formulations, so many words  
for wordlessness—  
or just the next hungry body.

3.

Elvis's long-heralded return  
in '68, I think, after all of the hideous movies,  
was a moderate shock. I don't know, I guess I thought  
his hair and clothes  
would be mildly hippified, at the least,  
what with the Summer of Love and all that.  
But he dressed like a retro cartoon teddy boy, a fifties rocker  
shellacked in black leather, a superhero whose superhero brothers  
wore tight outfits too but could fly.

Elvis couldn't fly. He had to manage on the ground in secret.

For all of his ironic self-inflation,  
they say he was a humble and kind man, always.  
He would never hurt a soul  
down here.

And he had such a time singing  
his self-spangled comeback. For some of it, the band was seated  
in a casual circle on a very small stage, an intimate live audience,  
and he kept grinning at his bandmates  
like they all knew the world's  
most acutely sweet secret. They all knew the world's most acutely sweet secret,  
and were letting us have it,  
one quarter teaspoon at a time.

Like there wasn't a single note  
he wouldn't die alive for.

4.

2019. People are walking around in near-cryonic  
states of the soul,  
when not boiling over with anger and stress.

It's this other king, a tabloid celebrity ratcheted up  
to hugely puke-worthy, banana-republic con.  
Might as well say it again. *Fascist*.

Donald, if you really want to bully us  
with your ongoing freaky, petty, and vindictive tweets,  
if you want the media scandal of all scandals,  
just remind us in your daily belches  
that we are all going to die. Think of it!  
You can get back at anyone  
who has ever called you a goon or a fool  
or pure moral slime on MSNBC.  
Just tweet out to everyone DEATH  
DEATH DEATH DEATH just whisper it  
in one-hundred and thirty-nine characters  
plus a tiny emoji skull.

But you won't. I know you won't.

BTW, you are too stupid to breathe.

\*

BTW, I'm not intimidated by any of your tweets.  
I'm strong. I can talk about all

that I don't have in this life  
and I can talk about all  
that I will someday not be. I've been preparing  
for awhile, ok? Even today, right here.

\*

Maybe we should turn the whole ugly thing  
back on you. Maybe we should march in the thousands or millions  
to the White House and erupt  
in one glorious voice *Donald Trump you are going to die!*  
*Someday, Donald Trump, you really are going to die!*  
*Fool yer already dead and don't know it!*  
*Think about it, Cheeto!*

At which point they'll arrest me and put me in Gitmo,  
where they'll torture me till I talk.

I won't know what to say, and can only manage to squeak, *Viva, viva*  
*Las Vegas!* so of course they will kill me.

That's ok. I'm prepared.

\*

Well, I'm preparing. I'm trying.

Friend, if you're there, it would help  
if you could whisper any tender,  
mad truth you hold close to your life.

What I mean is, let's collaborate.  
I'll tell you my nightmares  
If you'll tell me yours.