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21st century variation of ten oxherding pictures (the mule version)

"complete the circle before it is completed for you"
- hashim the sidqi

1.

the mule is unaffiliated & inappropriate- straying farther & farther from definitions. he's no elusive butterfly, more a scorched moth bumping & bruising himself against grand inquisitional klieglight- that leaves an observer wondering if its rugged individualism or a death wish. is he blind or just clumsy? its been said that god qualifies those he calls- but what of those he blesses with the silent treatment?

2.

it was only a matter of time before someone tried to lay an evocative title on him. deemed him fit to be tied- (for his own good of course.) a short lease suggests zero tolerance & a bullwhip speaks a universal language. its not in the mule's nature to give up without a fight, but the dice are loaded. the deck is stacked. the clichés runneth over. they are determined to tame impulse & desire. make him a credit to his species.

3.

the smoke & mirrors, dazzling special effects & jarring version of amazing grace play on his weaknesses. the mule is almost convinced that this is a necessary rite of passage. he wonders if maybe the whip is a mere prop, that will be replaced by something equally paternal but a tad more tolerant. all it takes is a split second of indecision to become another accident statistic- or worse a co-operative demographic. to fall prey to insidious behavior modification. reduced to a reassuring, unthreatening sameness.

4.

now the mule seems content with clever plays on words. to not stray far from forty acre promises. to not cross the fine line between commitment & being committed. it becomes a semantical question at best. the road of

excess is a pipedream. time is better served perfecting secret handshakes that help get a foot in the door. his hindquarters are a menacing shade of purple. a cautionary tale for any would-be insurrectionist. if you look deep in his eyes- there's still a small flicker of recognition, though muted & melancholy.

5.

cool & detached- the mule is free to wander, any cinematic jump-cuts have been replaced with a story line that only a fool would question. at this point he'd settle for entertainment. the buckeye tree is essentially useless, but always ripe for hanging. a constant reminder if he should consider resuming his old ways. he no longer notices the over-sized price tag he drags behind him or the lunchboard around his neck- linking him to corporate sponsorship. a walking advertisement for the golden ring.

6.

the mule is no longer able to fly off in any direction. he reserves his deepest emotions for unattainable figures. he has faith in a narcissistic predestination. too consumed with technical proficiency to actually create anything. convinced that freedom- being left to one's own devices would only result in falling into predictable patterns.

7.

the mule is no longer capable of either fiery, punishing sermons or balm-like, compassionate contemplation- unedited, from the heart. he's no longer concerned with places he'll never see. with faces he'll never know. he moves with a loping stride that belies fears & insecurities. the constant ringing registers all the numbers, but drowns out the mystery train- which at this point he might mistake for an apple cart anyway. content & carefree. secure in a strong group identity. white-washed to within an inch of so deep in the groove that he's convinced this is the dance.

8.

the sun's gone down on memphis, on appachian footnotes, on the valley of the blue-eyed boys. east meets west in a common greedy bonding experience. a harmonic convergence that looks good on paper, but is code for- how many shots will it take to bring down a runaway mule. is that the moon or a reworking of a previous idea that bombed? is that a haloed contenance about the mule's skull or frosting on the puppet head? all that's left are stupid questions. he's been reduced to a punctuation mark.

9.

no one sees the mule- but not to worry. he now exists within a reality clouded with limitations that are self-imposed. no need for chicken wire or social darwinism. he's settled for mere accommodations. he has faith in the "natural process".

10.

they claim the ten thousand things have been returned to proverbial square one. the lilies of the field have fallen victim to the plow. the sparrows have become eerily silent. the stone is too large to roll away. we can only venture a wild guess as to who or what is behind all this. strangely enough the mule has been completely forgotten- another shining example.