

JENNIFER FOOTMAN

Sudan: a picture of a Dinka woman and child at the al-Mughad camp.

you stare into the camera
your eyes at least alive

teeth protrude from a wooden skull,
dry breast folded, skin on bone,
you hold the child against your side
slack; there's nothing more to give.
lady, don't look at me like that.

your lottery was not my doing i read no genesis,
threw no dice to decide how the genes fell, which
seed went to which soul,
painted only private hells,
did not decide you, nor myself.
lady, don't look at me like that.

i dare not call you, sister. you are
not my sister never will be.
you have no colour of skin, no sex, are beyond
sisterhood.
lady, you strip colour. you, who drowned the rainbow, are
stripped of skin,

stripped of woman, stripped of everything
you, naked, make me naked.
lady, don't look at me like that.

damn you, go and look at your men like that.

is there a point?
do they open their eyes, those men,
to the choosing of sides? listen! i picked no sides
chose no victor.

come on ... let them see what they do.
they are the ones who decided you, you, me, me.
they picked our conceptions, our hungers,
they drew the line
they named the parts.
always that male god of war, death erect,
tossing destiny away like a dry picked bone.

lady, go and look at them like that.

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Australian Feminist Studies
Research Centre for Womens Studies
University of Adelaide
GPO Box 498
Adelaide 5001
South Australia