

ARUSHA

GALLERY

On Hydriotaphia

If I could start again, I don't know that I would. That's the truth. It was rough enough the first time through, without knowing what was coming. A second coming'd be hard to take.

That's mortality speaking.

But if I could, I might give clay a go. Clay seems honest enough work for mortals.

Clay is mortal business. Dirt and spit are the beginning and the end of what we know. The ancients knew it.

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Grave making might be the oldest religion among the likes of us. It might be that the investment in a mortuary drama - provisioning the newly dead with ochre, shell, bead, blade, comb, spindle, mead cup, clay dioramas of an afterlife - is what marks that shudder in sapiens, when they fashioned a lucid dream of something like dusty continuity for themselves and their loves out of a nightmare dread of disappearance and eclipse. What the likes of us put in the ground with our kin, furnishings for the mudhouse of ourselves, tells the story of what we'd have in place of immortality.

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There's no lifting us, though, from the dirt and the spit. Not with noble thoughts, nor with anything well wrought. With our first breath, and with all the strivings set loose in breathing, we strike a covenant with the Makers: if we want to live, then we'll have to die.

That's grief speaking.

And this work of Rosie McLachlan is old the way grief, the Old Hurt, is old. It's grief savvy.

Our century needs that savvy.

- Stephen Jenkinson, 2024