

Montage for Martinets

Each day the blood requires an acrobatic stunt—
The vivid pictures in the brain compete like tumblers:
One hazards a rajah's jeweled turban, one hopes for a tiger hunt.

Nothing is beyond this wavering arabesque—
One thinks to keep the head in reach, wearing just a baseball cap,
But one among those bold and naked figures ends up in a casque.

So we afflict ourselves with all that we can take of regimental drill,
Nude soldiers sounding off, counting off, forever,
But somewhere in high grass the members of the raj are hunting still.

I am too white, too nude, and long for darker skin,
Hot eyes, oil, unction, the warmest wealth of jewels:
I am being made by those stark figures illiterate within.

Which is not to say that anything but art can tap
What is of the world but not yet in it,
Heating to explosion whole gymnasiums underneath a baseball cap.

Just when we have them in a row, something rigid slips—
"Wipe that smile off your face" could be received in Sanskrit:
From man to man, one cannot say which retort quivers longest
on what lips.

— *Charles Edward Eaton*