

Ishion Hutchinson – The Ethereal Verse

By J. Diego Medrano

In the opening poem of *House of Lords and Commons*, “Station,” the speaker fans gnats out of his eyes to see clearly the things before him. Reading Ishion Hutchinson’s poetry requires something similar. You must fan away the thoughts, the theories, the expectations you have as best you can, because the first step is to just *see* – to take in the words, the music, the layers upon layers of imagery. Hutchinson’s poems make their brutal points by wandering, and you must wander with them, letting your own memories and impulses surge. Only once you have a sense of the raw sensation in each poem can you begin to dismantle lines like, “History is dismantled music.” For images such as, “the night smelled / of bullets, the moon did not hide, / the prisoners prayed in their bunkers,” we must be engulfed in the scene before we can understand.

Those feelings only intensify the understanding that follows. When we read “The Difference” and see those bolo ties, hanging above gluttonously well-fed stomachs in starched shirts, we understand what it’s like to watch dignified things – countries – reduced to money, a topic of business, and then money again. We get stark impressions of isolation, of the inadequacy of small education from “Pierre.” *House of Lords and Commons* is a powerful collection that shows off Hutchinson’s ability to string together images in such a way that we understand them intuitively.

Meanwhile, *Far District* is a testament to how Hutchinson can impart upon readers the emotions of experiences they’ve never had before. The small-town fear in “Darkness Everywhere” is something I have never known, but I am offered a taste in its verse. Hutchinson can reach into powerful experiences with his verse and pull out their core, their essence, and deliver them without any kind of explanation whatsoever.

This is the kind of writer who we are honored to welcome to Rollins. Hutchinson will be teaching a master class to the Winter with the Writers interns on February 8th, an event that is open to the public. In this master class, where the poet will workshop student-written work, we will be privy to his methods. Following his master class, there will be a reading in the evening, where Hutchinson will deliver his own work in his own voice.

Ishion Hutchinson seems to blend thoughts and senses seamlessly to create an experience that understands through feeling and cries intellectually. Guests of the festival are more than welcome to confirm all this praise for themselves.