

TORERO

Great images. Lots of them.  
I underlined some of the  
ones I liked best.

Incarnadine dawn came before Santos slept.  
Day of the corrida!  
A dark mountain sprouting stiff yellow flowers  
and reverberating thunder waited behind his eyelids.  
He must strike lightning into a certain crater  
between the damp ridges  
before thunder passed him through.

Early to the rites of preparation, steeping  
in the vow to avenge his brother Miguel.  
Long prayer before the Virgin. Hot laughter  
with his comrades, fear encased in brocade,  
superstition covered with colors of scorn.  
He had even secretly looked at his bulls. The breeder  
told him one was twin to the hooking horn-wise engine  
that routed Miguel's soul with a splintered thrust.

Last notes of La Virgen de la Macarena flared  
from trumpets, eddied through the heat  
in Santos's head. Shrill corkscrews pulled  
the cuadrillas into the circle of ferret eyes.  
A thousand prisms paving his shoulders ignited  
in dusty sun. The circle hailed his name, caressed it,  
intimate as a lover with the sound of it.  
Something else--treble breeze perhaps, pitched  
to the trumpets--hissed his name, paced his march step,  
clung to the afterbeat. The two flashing semaphores  
beside him were silent, fierce-smiling  
their aficionado faces. His name wound back  
in the bell of a horn or the wind's mouth.  
The musicians played with too much pathos today.  
It was better when they blasted, pompous and bawdy,  
like ponderous heralds of Caesar.

"Dios, we have a gale," growled an assistant.  
"We will have to drown the capes!" The wind examined  
the folded bright colors, the hair of men and horses.  
"Don't work so close, Santos," his banderillero pleaded.  
"You don't have to paint your belly  
with the bull's blood. You're here. It is enough."  
Layers of eyes probed Santos's pores;  
the wind stuttered his name. He made no reply.

Santos did not hear hoofs pulverizing sand,  
sounds of the watered cape, the olés. His first bull  
was a mountain, an armed freight train,  
the blood-mate to Miguel's damaged and devious one.  
But this bull was honest, boldly magnificent, like one  
his grandfather once spoke of, spared by the wishes  
of an admiring crowd. Never to happen again.  
Santos heard only wind instruments deciding his dance,  
humming his mind like wires, then the racking force  
of his will arcing the ring, entering the pic,  
bracing it against the picador's old sin  
of twisting, and stealing the best of his bull.