

The Man With The Golden Throat

by Ed Frankel

Crassus knew he had to have that slave's body,
or else, being dead, the gladiator would become
all the more dangerous, slipping away
like smoke from his first signal fires on Vesuvius,
slipping away into the maelstrom of years,
the broken stories in vulgar Latin,
in all the foreign tongues of slaves,
the African talking drum, the war chant
of the tattooed, red-bearded Gauls,
the backward writing, of the stiff necked Jews.

But after the battle in Lucania,
Spartacus' body was never found.
And then, Pompeii, Crassus, Caesar,
were snapping at each others' tails
and the mother bone which was Rome.

Plutarch tells us that Crassus received
for his service to the Republic,
Asia Minor and the Middle East
which he squeezed until more was not enough.
He attacked the Parthians under Hyrodes,
whose general, Surenus, lured him
onto the open plains where Parthian horsemen
shredded his formations, and the light
mounted archers turned in their saddles
firing backwards, as they retreated
out of range of the legions spears.

Crassus was captured by Surenus,
who poured molten gold down his throat.
Crassus once the wealthiest man in Rome,
whose body lay, somewhere on the plains of Carrhae,
food for carrion birds.

King Hyrodes gave a victory feast.
When Sillaces brought in the head of Crassus
The actor, Jason was singing *The Bacchae* of Euripides.
Sillaces threw Crassus' head into the final scene.

Agave picked it up and pretended it was Penthius,
her son, torn apart with her own raptured hands.
Later, the head became a prop on a stick
at the palace entrance for all to see,
the solid gold dripping from Crassus' lips.

now hardly anyone remembers Crassus,
a white marble statue with a furrowed brow,
except the custodian in the British Museum
who dust his face with a feather broom.