

JOHN WALL BARGER
TWO POEMS

INSIDE THE BUDDHA

statue, past *Do Not Enter*, up the metal stairwell paunch,
through his ears I saw tourists picnicking on the neat lawn,
& out his third eye the bright sun set. A friend
defined *suchness* as a willingness to wait for beauty
with an arrow in your chest. As the red ball of focus climbed
up the back of Buddha's skull, I remembered a mouse
in Manhattan, mashed into a sidewalk crack,
mouth rammed open as if amazed, teeth pulverized.
Hands on my knees, dividing the flood of citizens
like a branch, it felt good to let my soul watch the mouse.

HEATHROW TERMINAL C

This luggage I wake up wrapped around.
Big slow droplets fall on my shirt, marking time.
The soul shrinks in this belly of a hungry goat,
where four rough seas of citizens converge. Sushi, toys,
pharmacy, Harrods, CDs—&, stooped at centre,
Starbucks, skinny, mean, a prison guard.
A woman feeds herself french fries
under her *burka*. Stoic Punjabi cleaners, guardians
of the lost janitorial rites, thread our field of panic,
our yowling babes, our lovers whose heads bow in quarrelsome
reverence, our Merriweather twins in pony-tails
& sweatpants, sustaining gentle midmorning
anaphylactic meltdowns. We trudge to our gates,
feeling the insult, moving deeper inside
the insult, while the day glides past on the sidewalk escalator
like a handsome pilot with no luggage
holding one orange vial of duty-free perfume.