What happens?

A speaker addresses a museum pot, questions its removal and imagines returning it home.

The main idea

Addressing a displaced object becomes a way to question the authority of museums and recover the human relationships behind display.

1. “fragile”

Method: Adjective

Physical delicacy can serve as a reason for preventing movement.

2. “looter’s”

Method: Possessive noun

A possible history of violence disrupts neutral language about acquisition.

3. “loved”

Method: Verb

Use is recast as a relationship of care rather than simply possession.

4. “growl”

Method: Imperative

The request for a response exposes the object’s silence and the speaker’s longing.

Form and structure

Free verse with irregular spacing, questions and repeated address; the unresponsive object prevents a completed dialogue.

Development, voice and tone

Questions about arrival — Suspicious and probing. The speaker tests explanations that make the pot’s displacement seem accidental or legitimate.

Making and use — Affectionate. Imagined touch and daily usefulness restore a human history obscured by exhibition.

Return and silence — Hopeful, then unresolved. The speaker’s own experience of return becomes an invitation the pot cannot answer.

Context

Dedicated to a Nigerian pot in Manchester Museum, the poem questions provenance, empire and return.

Comparison links

Name Journeys: displaced cultural history. A Portable Paradise: recovering a sense of home.

Recall question

What does the pot’s silence prevent the speaker from resolving?

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