happy birthday super cheaper

suffering all around
there is a stray dog in the street. he is hungry and confused in the middle of the road, cars are racing by, and he doesn’t know which way to go.
i am a child in a bus, and i look out and wonder why no one is helping him
in church people always talk about ‘our brothers keeper’, ‘whatever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me’, and ‘love is the greatest commandment’.

trash

some people throw all kinds of useful things away.
at the end of the term at the university, former students, recently graduated and upon moving, would throw everything away – furniture, clothing, bedding, food, dishes – all relatively new, new with tags attached, or slightly used. these trashers somehow got through a university degree without hearing the mantras,

reduce, reuse, recycle
keep it out of the landfill
a penny saved is a penny earned

wealth
if it is a sin to throw away a crust of bread (the body of christ)
because it can keep a bird alive
and there are starving people everywhere
and animals, people losing their homes
trees become cardboard junk mail, throw-away furniture
homes left empty to the mosquitoes and rats
the throw-away of useful things

searching
the dump, the bin, the sorted- through,
redemption

is it true, that most places in the world have a different idea about trash, such as, there is no trash. everything, everyone, is useful somehow, either for what it is, such as a rope, or for what it can be made into, or for what it can be by just be-ing.

empty juice boxes, dry and dull, sewn together make a purse
old newspapers wrap a fish
that old torn stocking beats the drum

i am a crow in the harvested cornfield
a scavenger at the thrift store
a downward-looker
like a vulture flying overhead
pebbles, sand dollars, driftwood, treasure

*happy birthday super cheaper* is an art series made up of scavenged items, found in the trash, on the ground, or in thrift stores. for those who believe in the concept of *inanimate*, as if something could be not-alive, yet hold its form for years, these objects in the form of animals represent species in our consciousness or imagination, or at least, in our visual memory.

each animal, as if it were an *Animal*, has been considered, and a special set of clothing made especially for each one, honouring, and transforming a Being from refuse (one that was once cast away) into ‘art’. the wool used here is from a trading post on the Navajo reservation and the also from the thrift store, the bark is scavenged from trees felled to condominium development in the Vancouver area.

the cast offs, the forgotten ones, the expendable ‘trash’ are here now, dressed in their finery, as if attending a fancy birthday party or grand ball. they are all gathered together, each sees the other for their worth, and at the party there is more than enough to eat and nourishing things to drink. everyone takes food home, in the legacy of a redistributive economic system which aboriginal peoples of the americas are famous for, in a statement for the recognition of generosity as a keystone to a healthy society. the food in this imaginary give-away, this feasting ceremony, is enough to last the year, and everyone has a safe home to return to where no one hits or hurts. it is a child’s wish, naïve make-believe in advocacy for the end of domestic violence, in recognition for the United Nation’s Right to Food, the equality of all beings, environmental justice, the need for true biodiversity, and ethno/ecological thought and practice.

*happy birthday super cheaper* is about how work, attention, time, will and stubborn Making transforms trash, re-creates it, here, into objects or people who are valued. it is about the transformative power of handwork, for the maker and the receiver, and the solidarity of the cloister; it is for those of us who toil alone, we weavers, ditch diggers, fry cooks, maids, and monks.

*happy birthday super cheaper* is named after a gas station mini mart that had life-sized elephants, tigers, and giraffes in the store, all wearing party hats. it was torn down for a chain gas station. the animals are now in a landfill somewhere, resting in pieces no doubt, where it all ends up, unless someone pulls you out, or you pull yourself out, and put it all back together.

annie ross