



Leave of the Mind

Two Heartbeats Away

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Leave of the Mind

My friends in a foreign country,
that late autumn or winter morning, crowded round an exotic, purple-red
flower plant, were, I felt, in another planet.

The chrysanthemum, just a reach away,
seemed to exude its own bright yellow
glory with unabashed exuberance.

My friends too shone, unabashed,
in their colourful, migrant personalities.

Within leaves, purple outside, as within
the friends, yellow, brown, dark, white outside
there stirred a deep, intricate complexity
too marvellous to dismiss sceptically.

Later my friends and I heard a white,
self-proclaimed native railing, drunk,
on a city pavement, against our colourful
interior rootedness, Go back from where you came!

Go back! Back! Back! You go back into
your piss-and-shit sewer! Back! Back!
my colourful friends shouted back,
stirring in me, once again, that alien planet wonder.

One said, Never take leave of the mind, if you

don't want to fall into that stinking sewer.

Back in my country I can't call home

though I'd been rooted in its earth

for centuries, I saw no such gathering

around the purple-red plant of integration.

Instead I saw the self-deceiving brown

put forth the leaves of disintegration

against the white, yellow, dark,

the boundless, with an unnatural hate.

They'd taken leave of the mind

never to return to the inner rootedness

of our billion-years old receptive earth.

Two Heartbeats Away

He saw darkness everywhere:
in his people, rivers and roads,
villages and towns, until a fever
carried him deep into himself,
and he saw and sketched
what lived in his imagination.
A light filled his consciousness,
but only brought temporary relief.
He sketched even more desperately,
barely snatching a few hours of sleep,
to hold the light back longer.
A greater flood of forms came.
But why did the light desert him
the minute he turned away from them?
He lay sleepless, probing into
this repetitive disappearance of the light.
How else to hold it back?
The answer came after another
frenzy of desperate sketching:
he'd to turn this inner into an outer light!
That could only be done, sadly, in a country

where there was less darkness,
where there was already an outer light,
flickering, sometimes blindingly strong,
sometimes disappointingly weak.

What could give the steady light he wanted?
He ploughed into his imagination again.

Water! And there it was in this other
country, a gigantic waterfall cascading down,
then swirling in great, powerful currents!

He ploughed again into his imagination,
frenziedly, sketching every screw, bolt and nut
until he'd the machine that'd light the world.

How it travelled, once installed, to the city
more than a hundred miles away!

How the business, entertainment hubs rejoiced,
for now they could work throughout the day,
celebrate life, hungrily, late into the night!

But the steady light didn't stop there.

Travelling through the centuries, it connected
other, astonishing lights: minds working
at lightning speed, hands moving deftly, with
certainty, until that man's frenzied imagination

brought a girl in a nearby country her vision,
brought a girl in a distant country her voice,
for the light built a fresh pair of eyes,
for the light fashioned a fresh throat.
They saw and danced and sang,
come out from their incompleteness!

There was this other man
who too saw darkness everywhere:
in his people, in the streets,
in the houses, on children's faces.
He plunged, frenzied, into his mind,
there to find in its shallows, the darkness
he cherished, the darkness that would
bring him relief only when he flung
it from himself. He'd to carry the blight
to the people who'd overwhelmed
him, his innocent kith and kin.

Happily, there were many lands
he could gain entry, lands that had
sent exploiters to rob his country clean,
pour poverty into his people's lives,

put yearning in the children's faces,
hunger in their bellies. Rightly, these
lands welcomed him with humble,
repentant arms, so this man thought,
for all the suffering they'd caused.
No, not humility at all, only proud guilt,
this man thought, as he luxuriated
in their guileless open-heartedness.
The brightness he saw in the streets,
shopping malls, apartment blocks
and in their faces, only infuriated him,
inflamed the inner darkness even more.
He spent many sleepless, tormenting nights
groping for a way to turn all that brightness
into blight, the inescapable darkness.
Then he'd it! The simplicity astonished him!
He studied every part of the rented machine,
every nut, bolt and screw. What a wonderful
thing all that brightness had put together!
He waited until the people gathered
in a great number to celebrate
this brightness on a seaside road.

Then he drove this wonderful machine
into them, ploughed into men, old and young,
women, married and virgins, boys and girls,
barely out of their doll-clutching years.
He saw them scatter before this sturdy,
ruthless machine, relishing their fear.
The machine caught those who couldn't
flee, their terror freezing their minds and legs,
he thought, under the wheels of vengeance, the metal
and rubber crunching them into bloody meals
for the darkness that poured out of him.
As he drove brutally into them, zigzagging,
he felt freed from the darkness, saw it
enfold those who'd brought it so heartlessly
to him, his kith and kin. He fled on light feet
and lighter heart, leaving the machine standing
in all that carnage, gore-painted by its triumph.
Only two or three heartbeats away
lay a girl, under a canvas darkness,
her doll a hand-reach away, its eyes open,
waiting for the girl to lullaby it to sleep.