



POETRY

DEBASIS MUKHOPADHYAY

Threaded Back

what of this hole in the skin

something about the sun
cracking in the blue
below the horizon

the threads
scarlet
have nowhere to go back
but to dark
that dried yesterday
all over the tundra

the needle
made of day
could ever be
like yesterday
a shade on the stitch
figuring out
figuring out

Oblivious

i was not a bad poet then
 the cut on my forehead would still sing with the moon
 as though untying the knot
 of a man of chance
 returning to the last line of Kafka's spot —
like a dog, like a dog —
 a fish knife in his eye
 as bare as the moon
 wailing for a pantomime
 & a cluster of sheep surfacing to my poems humming
that's fine, that's fine
life, no billowing
 i was not maladroit enough to think of a metaphor
 to travel into with my fate
 i would just sing along
that's fine, that's fine
mi luna mi tierra

i was not a bad poet then
 flaked off the borage blue of the night
 the moon kept waning
 in my heart
 with gored sides
 that could still
 cleave a path through the darkness
 i knew
 feeling full of purpose
 before the brumal blade
 or trying to unfold a crease
 that life holds as jarred
 were to impede
The Trial
 not worth trying

'with twenty hands'
 how much longer
 could i then behold
 the smile of the summoners in opera hats
 like relics of a long gone love
 everything in the dulling parable
 was beckoning me nearer to the spleen at the back of my throat
 as quiet as
 the night laboring in that page
 & pages, pages, pages, pages
 that would come into being
 to become blotched with an estranged sour touch
 of the words
 i tried
 dead & alive
 years to come
 & drift past them
 when prowling in that moonlit quarry
 they all would learn to lament:
oh poor frog, your heart is still beating! what are you K.?

Indian Journal

New Delhi: to get more than the dawn

a red tulle body flaring up.
 the mosquito net
 white & whooshing at times
 & this foundry of wings of mosquitoes
 now ready for the spilled over blood.

here sun.
 somewhere birds crack the sky
 dawn what I fear has never been so late
 kid's head buried in my chest.
 do I know
 what's to cry like a bleating sheep
 broken lines unfurls K's poems in my thoughts
 obliterating the bleeding sun dissolving into now a distant hum
 very soon a cacophonous mix
 what's K to make of it in his poems
 I think of the young poet of Kolkata.
 somewhere the oblique overpasses ask for boundless love
 slogging through memories
 snuffing out the first azan of the day & the litanies of the stray dogs

kid's skull rolls on my chest
 his eyes waking to dawn
 what's that poet to make of it
 kid's eyes etched on his notebook page
 which is perhaps whiter than the mosquito net now emptied like times
 when I used to live in this land
 & never had to step inside.
 tomorrow I would be again in Kolkata
 brushing dust from a palimpsest
 today I would just pass the day
 Kipling Sahib gazing hatefully on New Delhi
 the breeze stirring a tattered liana of *madhabilata*
 high up among the colonial columns
 dust on dust
 to creep through

Kolkata: the waterboarding

K's poems are now bowing lower than this plane
 bleeding off its speed

the cinnamon colored brick kilns look plastered by a green
 that feels so unwanted in a blood brick telecast on BBC
 years of rising smoke have gnawed the moulded bricks but the green
 green green so green that I turn to Lorca's ballad
 & cry like a fool unheeded

for the girl of bitterness

until the touchdown when I hear K whispering

I leave you alone for the eve

now you would be too blind to trust my poems

begin me only when you end your quick days & nights in Kolkata

when you are left again to think that

*you are still stuck like an albino bone in its craw made of loose scoria
 these long years*

these long years

were not so imminent in my mother's dream

of me becoming a Caliph one fine day

seven thousand miles away.

these long years were not a life book

that rustles inside memories dying in the throat.

for a crown of light

she has been counting a thousand & one nights.

every morning

kneeling to the earth she tries to find me again amongst the sprouts.

ba the world has to pass

mutters my father

sparrows cluster in the back of his throat.

& here we are home, kid

bello bello

I say opening the gates of shadows of the crows

aloft & aground.

the long-spiked coconut tree leaves dance across K's sun-blazed note-
 book page

capturing kid's fingers making a ghost with a lump of earth

mine tearing the sword-shaped leaves only to reminisce all afternoon

upon a palm frond hat from my school days

maybe everything might have been...
 everything like your face in my hands
 dark eyes glistening in the folds
 like malaria now & then
 those love vomit & rum stained clothes
 moving under the coal iron in the neighborhood
 coming back laundered the following afternoon
 only to redeem truth
 & to rehearse a hundred summers of solitude...
 to think I'm going to see you again tonight
 a conjurer had his time
 on earth this is the place
 where I can sing *I am your man*
 a place that has no place in time
 or maybe it's always just half passed
 like this late afternoon sun on water in K's notebook page
 like this fish put out to crawl through a hologram
 never failing kid
 fish eyes always give him thrills

processions pass
 the foreheads of the deceased pressed against the cobwebbed evening
 feel the reference point that had rattled so hard in life
 now the queue in the burning ghats
 souls reassured once oxidized flake after flake
 & then beguiled by the creeping waters.
 placid slumbers the Ganges like the night at the bottom of the root
 this is the country
 where cicadas chase every evening the crackling stars of each cast & class.
 my friend sings taking my breath away
 the dead to become boats floating downward the rim of the dark skies
 drifting anew in the city alleys
 in search of hearts that had no refuge from any versions of hearts.

processions pass
 shouts drawling a tribute to dawn
 poppy red flags
 a street full of scars
 you ask me how I feel now with my eyes peeled
 K's poems stopped to bleed into the evening
 so wet & claiming
 now again mouth into mouth
 we keep frisking & gamboling round the night
 we come & coming on
 like a hemorrhage
 like Fidel Castro floating belly up dying of his own death
 I need not watch for the moon
 I close my eyes to get more than the dawn
 more than its billow & spray
 more than K's love poems glittering like war
 their curl of waves that come rolling in
 & I say
Kolkata,
my tin soldier
the waterboarding is all yours



Debasis Mukhopadhyay holds a PhD in literary studies and lives and writes in Montreal, Canada. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Curly Mind*, *After the Pause*, *Posit*, *Mannequin Haus*, *Yellow Chair Review*, *Thirteen Myna Birds*, *Of/With*, *I am not a silent poet*, *New Verse News*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *With Painted Words*, *Silver Birch Press*, and elsewhere. Follow him at debasismukhopadhyay.wordpress.com