

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/2

Sofiul Azam

Blood Blossoms

in memory of poets dead in wars

*"Carry my crying spirit till it's weaned
To do without what blood remained these wounds."
– Wilfred Owen*

I

In every century, I see a creeper with blood-blossoms –
looking better than aurora borealis. It lives on wars.

Am I the only one who sees black-tarped trucks come
stealthily as inamoratos in the silence of night
and strappingly like tanks in broad daylight?

II

This creeper is no picky eater, it eats all up. Locals
across the world cry all are becoming souls too soon.

What do I know of the souls as undulating
as crops on a mountainous terraced slope
or as vigorous as trained fishing cormorants?

III

This creeper doesn't bother about a global apology.
It doesn't know any backing off on its onslaught.

Not all are skygazers, but all are earthgazers
getting its blossoms merged into every canvas.
Our dreams are falling apart and totally on edge.

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IV

Everything's baffling as the behavior of a wildfire.

What happens next is hard to predict. Bees,

fed by the creeper's honey, will hunt you down

– wherever you hide, however long it takes –

and lay a bouquet of gratitude on each hasty dead.

V

Griffons circle overhead, waiting upon us:

the stink of a cancerous carrion in each of us.

We foolishly thought of it as valued as love

saved up snug in our hearts' safety lockers.

How can we hide it now from their scavenging eye?

VI

Memory is enough salt on Ovid's wounds –

Tristia as eerie as *ignes fatui* on swamps at night.

And just for a coronet of blood-blossoms

the nefarious killjoys let loose termites in a woodlot,

poop out in ennui. Nukes need not even be fired.

VII

And at times, pumice instead of words comes

out of my mouth as if it were the volcanic crater.

Should my life imitate art? Or my art

the humanity halfway down the road to hell?

This perplexity is no less prized than asteroids.

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The Insusurrection of Ruins

I'm a freaked-out word merchant, an on-street crooner
with a begging bowl amid the ravages of this perpetual war.
How can I be hawking words topped with my snippety concerns
to dying men who need bigger stuff like food and medicine?
Their demotic cries bring febricity to my body.
How long will I be a desensitized sidekick verbalizing
about terraculture to fleeing sailboats? What's there
for even a housewrecker except spoils? The smoothing over

is not for now anymore. The insusurrection of centrifugal
ruins doesn't need a sermonizer's prognosis. Everything
is prognosticable. Everything stinks like a turd in the flush toilet.
We are just psyched out, footslogging anathematized lungoors,
footstools for warlords – those wellborn and always prevaricating ones.
Does it matter if I prefer a close-knit family's adventure on a lilo?
But warlords' colubrine grumpiness impedes the take
of such warmed happiness. They might say that so much

of putting my nose into everything made me pug-nosed.
Yet buildings fall down, however square-built.
Now it seems the true meaning of life is darkness
and flowering decay. We are whittlings dangerously close to a fire.
They might say I'm a highjacker of the greater common good,
which is only possible through wars, also a reversionist
helping out with the outflowing of dread along the crankling path
for our dear old deaf peace who keeps jogging on a treadmill.

Note: "along the crankling path" is a phrase used by Drayton.

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A Worrywart's Acceptance Speech

Oftentimes I look at a birdhouse nailed to a tree
with a worry as if a pit viper would thrust its head into it soon.

I forget to see the mother bird feed its chicks by its beak.
I know what trouble she went through for worms – their protein.

I do not see the bird-lover's charity. Maybe I've missed his goodness.
Maybe the viper I've just imagined hasn't had anything for a week or two.

I remember an eagle flying at times, its talons as strong as gnarled twigs.
I'm sure its ancestors didn't know about Darwin's whereabouts.

And as for history, I say it preserves spoils with care.

Nobody blames it but they cut me short with their frowns as if I were

the spoilsport around, as if I wrote the scene of a Jewish girl
to be raped by Nazis and then thrown into the flames of a crematorium.

Nobody sees history's repetitions or they simply look away from them.

I see every rich country getting combat ready with its stealth fighters

as if a war in its backyard heated up. What will you make out of talks
when high-precision missiles only wait to come out of their silos?

Flamboyant rhetoric lurks behind calls for calm. Clips of horrors
go viral for our amusement as gladiators did for the Romans.

What do I have to do with celidography when I see those I love
gunned down in a mall or die as bats electrocuted by a high-tension wire?

I'd even die a thousand deaths while easing tensions with a cool head.
But I know all deaths only mean death. I'd rather have

sustenance from anxiety's sagged knockers. I'm just a worrywart
or a spoilsport for your sweet nap if you like. Maybe that's what I am!