

NATHANIEL TARN

Bartok in Udaipur

Golden city on her bed of sand  
breathing through her towers at the night  
immense distance between city and stars  
doves passing overhead  
taking their upper light from sky  
their lower light from city

No way to staunch flow stop river  
feed hungry pour drink down thirsty  
drop a coin into every one of a million hands  
no way to stop care quench sorrow  
no way to end it no way to keep flow  
from drowning out eyes no way to finish  
no way to grow into salvation no way to end it  
road sign on way to city life is short  
do not make it shorter think who awaits us all

From all our eyes flows pain  
roaring into life with every birth  
more births than can be counted on an army's hands  
equipped to conquer continents  
heroes stand out spearing at one throw  
a myriad boars or tigers  
but one blood flowing out one sufferance  
under dynastic sun sword stroke or parry  
calm in sky's eyes profoundly caring

Great sails in a sea of crimson  
 women advancing in greens and blues  
 flowers of air on a desert morning  
 gait leisurely pot akimbo high

City raising its hands to moon  
 over quiet water birds in hand  
 among leaves asleep flowers asleep  
 in purple blood spread over water  
 fisher his blinding turquoise dimmed  
 catching a flash of moonlight burning star  
 among cold stars diamond set sapphire  
 slant fish in beak yet another star

To live with one's own face alone  
 that face for a whole life over whatever  
 waters night may provide in constant presence  
 heroes rush down flame clad on battlefield  
 women walk with their children into fire  
 warriors thunder down to inevitable deaths  
 and lonesome moon with one face only  
 shines with an equal constancy over them all

Slinking in poverty by grey green lights  
 of palaces throned among emerald waters  
 it used to be our princes inside  
 exploding fireworks across this lake  
 now foreigners one with their money  
 to buy our rings and bangles buy some thing  
 would cost one of us earth's price  
 a dozen incarnations or a life's wages

Blue god drains all world's love to him

as his great heart walks over waters  
no need of feet wings alone unaided  
suspend it at a comfortable height  
terns at ankles gulls at knees  
over a hunter where he waits for tiger  
sudden receiving prey from sky  
in astonished gratitude

Down rushing warriors in burning clothes  
saffron on fire against golden sun  
sun's visage peering out of roses  
"Ornaments of the State" flowers palaces  
what matter which perfume on air  
invisible fires in devotional heart  
of princess in love with a blue forest  
youth on cloud enormous and inflamed  
blue sword cascading on blind child  
crippled for money set in its mother's arms

Epic simplicity in dream of stone  
raising its wall above our desert  
stone of sand and sand of stone  
streets running with saffron and blood  
stone hands the only archive left by women  
whispering windflowers walk into fire  
a bruin noise of camels in high distance  
night ships asleep over golden waters

Seed syllable towns pink white cerulean  
wait for their portraits on raising light  
but — lens crashes to ground and shatters  
with which we saw the stars and closer planets  
and studied all the more originalities  
blind now we cannot work or must develop

new eyes inside this fire so that whatever burns  
with joy or sorrow is but an ornament  
of one same state and not a decoration

To leave walk out in early morning mist  
from dung and dust women rise like flowers  
name fourfold origin see fourfold sufferings  
which from day to this under one sun  
have not desisted from this land in which  
we see love's fourfold origin in pain  
including that immense pain inflicted by beauty  
planet a lake alone hardly no firmness  
colossal cesspool covered with floating diamonds  
in the thirty thousand of whatever days  
you'll choose as measure of the human life

Home floating like a screen in our dreams  
light battlement lifts desert colored lake  
drained out with blood from all our veins  
after a life of miles longest day of the year  
on which to give thanks for life's blessing  
space around land and time for space to heal  
as if we were homing from another star