

Everything A Part

1

The sun makes its way over the horizon,
I sit with rapt attention, alone in the confines of the room,
no one else enters, no one else exits,
a far cry from the regular mode of human conversation.

I am greeted by the row of faces,
I have seen them before, I will see them again; I mark them and I perceive them as real;
I know them and I do not know them, and what I know is a fragment, a sliver of the whole,
For how can I truly know anyone when we have not breath'd the same air,
And been leveled by that simple, unguarded intimacy contained therein?

I cannot delight in their idiosyncrasies, and they in mine,
the subtle tilt of the head in bemusement, the nod of affirmation, the shrug of indifference,
rarely can I recognize these now-foreign cues.
It is as though my sight has been struck dumb;
not altogether blinded, but there is a cloudiness inherent to my perception,
for the online world is its own distinct domain,
comprising its own set of conventions.
How subtly does it deaden the spectator's discernment,
by sapping people of their substance.

I know only of their surfaces, the self they present to me and to the world,
I cannot plumb deeper, but I want to.
I can rarely exchange the sort of pleasantries that would unmask them to me,
The glance in passing, the convivial wave, the firm handshake, the jovial wink.
Seldom have I missed anything as much as another's laughter,
not in their arena, but in mine,
try as I might, I cannot tame the distance.

O to be assailed by this petty pace of retraced steps,
this strange and perpetual dance, mere months from my presumed departure.
I feel much like a bird whose wings are clipped,
he cannot yet soar to the heights long promised to him,
he must languish in the interim,
curious, uncertain.

He cannot yet probe his surroundings in self-governance as he would like,
cannot test the merits of his competency and character as he would like,
he longs to be put under that strain, that stress,
for independence cannot be reached undaunted.

2

I am all-encompassing, I am everywhere and I am everyone,

I see myself reflected in every inch of humanity,
for there is really no “us” versus “them”; we are all contain’d under one roof.

But alas, what differences we contain *are* perceptible,
And we often cast out those who do not look like us, or fit our mold.

And in this isolation some seek to root out a scapegoat,
to point the finger of blame upon whomever they so desire,
and in their anger and their fury they choose the easy candidate,
those with their hands on a lower rung of the ladder, those who are a minority in this nation.

The accusers taunt this minority, berate them, attack them,
place the origins of this virus squarely upon their shoulders by appearance alone.

They shame and condemn their fellow citizens,
they shame and condemn their fellow human beings,
(who are equally as blameless),
for it is far easier in a crisis to punch down against the powerless,
than to punch up against the mismanagement of those in power,
and so has it been throughout history.

3

How strange is it that they have been here all this time,
the lofty spruce, the delicate alder, the cedar and the fir, all unique and all one,
clinging to that same soil, croaking in the winter’s wind, inert and selfless,
awaiting my return.

And yet I have not taken heed of their offerings,
the whispers, the glances from that sea of beckoning limbs,
so rarely have I glimpsed their quiet beauty but from afar,
as witness but not participant in their acts.

For they have been usurped, though they do not know it,
eschewed too often for the glint and glimmer of the modern home and all its trappings,
the heady brilliance of the screen, intoxicating in its splendor,
offering up a million and one prompt pleasures at a moment’s notice and an hour’s cost,
the soft, welcoming folds of the couch, tempting me with leisure,
offering up rest and respite from the biting cold and windswept night,
the low click of the grate as it shudders to life, supplying the heat that cradles my flesh.

Or some days a fire burns bright in the hearth,
transforming which was once that spruce, that alder, that cedar, that fir.
Outside, those proud, idle giants gaze upon the corpses of their kin,
still waiting, still wondering why I do not strive to walk amongst them.

Is there not still that thread of connection between us that binds all things in nature?

I am far less primitive than my forebears, but would they not still have things to teach me?

Could they not vouch for every limb, every branch, every unspoil'd article of the forest,
(all rooted fast and firm in the sweet, damp soil in which my ancestors lay).
Could they not sing the praises of the water in all its disparate incarnations:
the tranquil calm of the bay, content to sit still, waves gently stroking the shore,
the meandering stream, going about its plodding pace with steady agenda,
the merciless intensity of the deep ocean with its haughty roars and violent declarations!

If I am truly all those that came before me,
Then, when the wild summons me, would I not go there gladly?
I am surely quite as human as they were human,
Do the same proclivities not lurk beneath my breast as beneath theirs?
Am I too far removed from them, too vain, too industrial?

Is it not custom for a person to know the place of their birth like the back of their hand,
to drink in the breadth of their surroundings?
And if they do not, is that not a disservice to all that they are, and all that they once were?

For too long I have dealt purely in artificial joys, easy to obtain but a dime a dozen,
the waves continue to crash roughly on the bank, unseen,
the trees continue to squawk and sway in the wind, disregarded,
and when they call out to me I do not reply.

Only now do I yearn for their embrace, to fill that void of isolation,
for the cutting-off of one relationship lends itself to the procurement of another.
If I cannot be among my kin, then I shall be among theirs,
and who can truly deny that they are not also my kin?

One day I resolve to go forth and make content my longing,
I navigate the winding country road down to the very edge of the coast,
I exit the car, blood pounding through my veins,
for I have at long last found that which I was seeking.

The spruce, the alder, the cedar, the fir; I am finally amongst them.
They smile as if greeting an old friend,
their sun-kissed branches shelter me from worldly concerns,
their sinuous roots fortify the ground on which I tread.

Not too far away, I hear the ocean with its steady rumbling,
reassuring me with its permanence.
There too is the beach, miles and miles of fine, powdery sand,
grains enough to sift through for innumerable lifetimes.
I take them all in; I value them all equally and individually.

I plant myself down next to an elderly Douglas fir;

it was there when I was born and may be there to receive me also.
I rest my head against its vast trunk,
sensing the steady hum of life within its core.
No longer do I feel alone, yet I am reminded that I never was.
They were always there, waiting patiently to welcome me into their midst,
ready to offer up their timeless beauty should I ever need it.
A laugh rings loud upon my lips,
I have found my companions at last.