

The TV Watchers' Villanelle

Rajeev Patke

Rajeev is Professor of Humanities and Director of the Division of Humanities at the Yale-NUS College in Singapore. He has written and edited several books on poetry and postcolonial studies and his research interests include the humanities in a liberal arts environment, the poetry of islands, the bilingual poems of Arun Kolatkar, and poetry and resistance.

That was a show on telly you couldn't miss.
It gave no clue nor said what comes after.
That's what kept us leaning o'er the abyss.

Between the time it took to rise and piss
Six goals, three fouls; then guns; then some laughter:
That was a show on telly you couldn't miss.

Go scuba diving if you wish. Don't hiss.
Sleep's the only other way things get better.
That's what kept us leaning o'er the abyss.

The boys had fun; so did the little miss.
Snug as geese in an air-raid shelter.
That was a show on telly you couldn't miss.

There's more between heaven and earth. So 'tis.
No quarrel. That's why the wedge's gotten thinner.
That's what kept us leaning o'er the abyss.

Knives flickered, lips shaped as if to kiss.
What really happened happened thereafter.
That was a show on telly you couldn't miss?
That's what kept us leaning o'er the abyss?

Hashish in Marseilles

A pantoum

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In the trace, we gain possession of the thing; in
the aura, it takes possession of us.
(Walter Benjamin)

He kept saying, How things withstand the gaze!
A look of serious intent fixed on his face
For magic that would lead him from this maze
To where the distance holds them as a trace.

A look of serious intent fixed on his face
Surprise grew like a word with open eyes
To where the distance holds them. Just a trace:
Secure, content, calm and without surmise.

Surprise grew like a word with open eyes,
Things looked at looked without intent.
Secure, content, calm and without surmise
Strangeness grew like a thought always meant.

Things looked at looked without intent
For magic that would lead them to this maze.
Strangeness grew – like a thought always meant
Things kept returning to withstand the gaze.

The Painting to the Painter

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To purify the expression of the reflected face is precisely the first task to be accomplished by an artist working on his self-portrait.
(Mikhail Bakhtin)



Did you nod to yourself and then make up
The rest – an after-brew whose taste we knew –
Or did someone keep peering in to view
The spillage and not the tea in its cup?
Or was it like the startled hiccup
Of one so sure that savor would renew
Every familiar sip in slow review

You choked that most of it was swallowed up?
Funny – isn't it – how much there is that just
Can't be laughed at, boiled down, or boiled away,
That kept you in and now brings – keeps – me out,
While I steam on with "what can be done, must"
In the glass you raise with such quiet dismay
To this conversation of kettle and spout.