

Poem: Marina Beach

Srinjay Chakravarti¹

Upon the sand, across the dunes
The wind is scribbling cryptic runes.
Our children search, collect and store
Seashells and conches from the shore.

We put their harvests to our ears
Memory is music to our years—
Our childhood returns to us now
We're young again, we find—and how!

The distant rumble of the tide
Resonates softly by our side;
The susurrant of surf and sea
Is captured in time's symphony.

Poem: Twilight of the Gods

Srinjay Chakravarti

Welcome to south India's Film City,
where anything and everything is an illusion—
the entire world seen as the play of maya.
Transitory. Beguiling. Evanescent.

It boasts locales of European towns,
corrals from the Wild West,
sets of Down Under—

¹ Srinjay Chakravarti is a writer, editor and translator based in Salt Lake, Calcutta, India

Twilight of the Gods

even a toy train,
a miniature fairground,
a dummy stadium.

However realistic the airport's façade
may look to the casual observer,
no plane can take off or land on its tarmac.

Painted screens of tacky plywood and cardboard
deconstruct palace, hospital, museum.
These architectural marvels are conjured
out of just two dimensions, versimilitude,
and deceptive camera angles.

As our tourist guide informed us,
this white edifice at the junction
of Wonderville and Thrilltown
that is mimetic of Makrana marble,
served as the universal Hindu temple—
the versatility of its sanctum being such
that any and every deity in the pantheon
could be conveniently installed on it.

Set up with the sets, and taken away
when they are dismantled:

Vishnu,
Krishna,
Rama,
Shiva,
Durga,
Kali,
Laxmi,
Saraswati,
Ganesha,
Kartikeya,
Surya...

the director's choice of numen
could be hired—on contract, of course—
for the duration of the day's shooting;
only to be packed up and returned
to its very own strongbox
at the end of the day—
to sleep in peace
till their next requisition.

Is this, then, the bathetic twilight
of our ancient gods? The grand finale?
To become props for the plot
of yet another kitschy tearjerker,
fated to be casually borrowed
for the exigencies of the script:

idols for the matinee shows, coming alive
only temporarily every afternoon
to rescue the macho hero out of his dilemma,

to pay homage to the fugacious shrine
of the fickle box-office,
with all its paraphernalia of gimcrack devotion—

brass bells, scented flowers, joss sticks,
glycerine and ketchup, catcalls and whistles.

Writer's Nightmare

Srinjay Chakravarti

A ribbon of wind spools
inside the apparatus
of the night sky.
The mountains are mapped out
on the tracing paper
of the frosted-glass windows.

Writer's Nightmare

The rain clatters
like an old Remington
on the tin roof

typing out its manuscript,
drenched with the monsoon.
Outside, the darkness hums

with the incessant downpour,
cicadas and frogs,
and the white noise of despair.

Orecchio Di Dionisio

Srinjay Chakravarti

Or, the 'Ear of Dionysius'
at the Temenites hill in Sicily.

It is here that the Tyrant of Syracuse
is said to have held his ear
to the ground,

carving an old limestone quarry
with rocks and silences
into a cave for his prisoners,

eavesdropping on their secrets
with his acoustics of deceit.

Designed so that his captives' screams
would be amplified
while they were being tortured:

this is the stuff of which legends are made,
echoing down the centuries,

when all the history is lost—
and all the pain is forgotten.

Hills of Eternal Spring

Srinjay Chakravarti

The Jampui hills, north Tripura:
popularly known as ‘the land of eternal spring’

With dawn, Mt. Balinchhip
Surfaces from its bed
Of white memory-foam clouds.

A tesseomancy of thunderheads
(The dregs of last night’s storm)
Is strained onto the sky’s blue saucer.
Spring lingers well into the monsoon here.

The waterfalls are gossamered
Into silken streamers of mist.
A mountain stream bubbles
Like a wet dream
From a crevice in the mossy rocks.

Coffee berries pendulate from branches—
Luscious, swelling with the sap
And aroma of morning alertness.

On the lush tea bushes,
A confetti of pierids
Showers yellow kisses.

Wildflowers yield their nectar
To the probing tongues
Of purple sunbirds and golden orioles.

Hills of Eternal Spring

Lemons perfume the air
With their keen musk.
Pheromones swirl; the fresh wind
Is heady with arousal.
Acres and acres of orange trees
Ripen in the sunshine
With their gleaming orbs,
Turgid with golden juices.

Black basalt rocks—
Fleshy, succulent purple grapes—
Glisten with condensed dew.

And, throughout the long day,
The slow drip, drip, drip
Of honey-coloured light
From the beehive of the sun.