

MONOGRAPH

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MONOGRAPH

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Editor's Note



This issue of Monograph not only features a completely new design but also an amazing set of writers. It is always a pleasure to host the writings of the wonderful Amit Shah. Reading his substack blog is something I really look forward to, and printing his work in Monograph is always delightful.

A new addition to Monograph's growing community of writers, Ananya Barman masterfully places Junji Ito's *Uzumaki* against the backdrop of Japan's history, tackling important questions with commanding prose. Finally, Shayeri Das' beautiful interpretation of Nabaneeta Dev Sen's *Return of the Dead* is a quick but impactful read, and one that I will never forget.

Anuraag Das Sarma
Editor-In-Chief
Monograph





Memorabilia of Spirals



ANANYA BARMAN

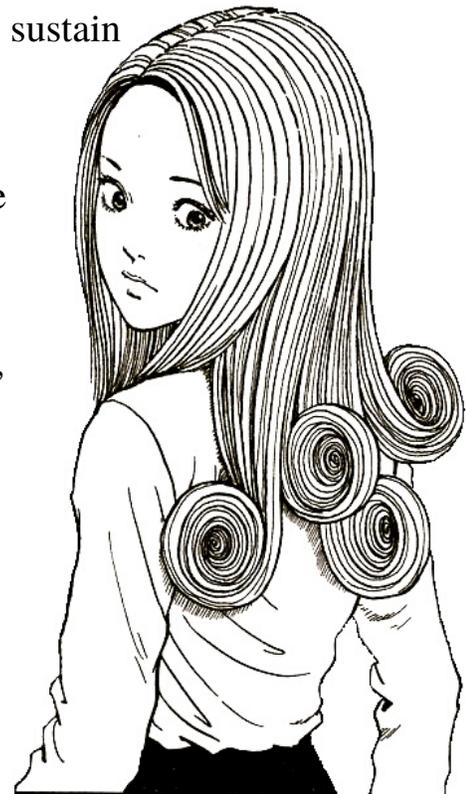
The purpose of this re-interpretation is to respond to Christy Tidwell's article *Spiraling Inward and Outward: Junji Ito's Uzumaki and the Scope of Ecohorror (2021)*. In her interpretation the manga is interpreted in light of environmental concerns; I would like to argue that Uzumaki's Ecohorror goes beyond naive interpretations of animal cruelty and climate change. Japan's nature discourse cannot be understood without taking into consideration the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural context of nature within which it was constructed, which she neglects in favor of a green environmentalist stance. This position ignores the political context in which nature is situated in Japan. According to Aike P Rots in his book *Shinto, Nature, and Ideology in Contemporary Japan (2017)*, right-wing political actors dominate the discourse on Japanese environmental issues today. In his research on sacred forests (chinju no mori), he examines the ideological constructions of these landscapes and their relationship to imperial symbols. His book also reveals how global green discourse has disguised imperial rhetoric in the Shinto environmental paradigm to create a popular imagination of Japan that is "harmonious with nature". It has emerged from its bloody past in a historical continuity as an "indigenous" way of life. This claim has been marketed by Japanese media, which is widely consumed worldwide and has become popular symbols for our generation. Junji Ito's work is well known, and Tidwell's greenwashing of it is irresponsible, to say the least. In this paper, I propose a reinterpretation of the ruination depicted in the Ecohorror of Uzumaki that reintroduces history and politics into this discourse. I suggest that this manga can serve as a cultural artefact containing imperial pasts of nature.

The Secrets of the Spiral



Initially manifesting as geometric patterns in water bodies, land, and even within humans, nature is symbolized by spirals that eventually take on unexplained sinister forms. Spirals are portrayed as spreading like viruses and invading, yet they attract people. Inexplicable spirals have power, regardless of whether characters embrace or reject them. Spirals become a frenzied obsession within the town, but some are so terrified that they isolate themselves in fear of contamination. Due to the spirals, natural disasters (hurricanes, typhoons, and earthquakes) begin to occur, resulting in a shortage of food, overpopulation, and social conflict. This situation allows some to gain power by riding the spiral wave. The spiral starts to become even more attractive. An individual who is tormented by hunger is tempted to join the spirals. The spirals can be interpreted as both nature and the “natural” ideology. This fear of overpopulation can also be traced back to 1930 when Japan’s population rose from 40 million to 64 million in 1930 excluding overseas territories. Combined with the global economic crisis and the aftermath of an earthquake, rural protests increased, and the conquest of the Manchurian lifeline became the focus (Young, 1998). The director of the Oji paper company, Fujihara Ginjiro, wrote in 1935 in *Kogyo Nihon seishin* (The spirit of Japanese industry) that since the country was unable to sustain itself in terms of raw materials, they should not allow anything to hinder their "industrial expansion". Physical limitations of Japan's nature were used ideologically by the oligarchy to make the physical world serve national rather than local purposes. A genealogized natural nation was far more expansive than the material natural world, and it required colonization, emigration, and centralized management (Thomas, 2001).

On July 8, 1853, American warships appeared off the coast of Japan. The concept of "religion" was first introduced by the official communications brought by them. The importation of



religion as a category triggered a re-invention of Shinto which was not constructed as a religion but as science by intellectuals of the time. The opening of Japan also marked an increased exposure to western forms of knowledge that inspired a taste for western statecraft and governance. This historical background laid the framework necessary to create a Shinto-scientific state that absorbed western science into its hierarchy. Hence, science not only co-existed with the ultra-natural state but it was effectively transmuted into its natural ideology (Josephson, 2012). As the imperial ideology subjugated all that lived over the superiority of their dead ancestors, the scientific gaze blurred the lines between human, animal, and nature. Shiro Ishii led a biological warfare project in Manchuria under the name Unit 731. Various human experiments and tests were conducted in these facilities, involving both humans and animals, to prepare for biological weapons and to advance science. Japanese officials initially lied to the Chinese residents of Ping Fan about the facility being a lumber mill in order to conceal their real agenda. Human subjects were often referred to as "logs" or "murata" by Ishii and his colleagues. Harris argues in *Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare* that past activities and externalities were not taken into account when calculating the toll of the sacrificed murata (Harris, 1994). The lines between humans, animals, and nature are also blurred in *Uzumaki*. Some transform into snails while still having some human-like characteristics, and the metamorphosis into human-animal hybrids leads to their dehumanization. In desperate times, some humans cook and eat snail people due to their dehumanization. Human experiments are illustrated in the chapter "The Umbilical Cord". Through the illustration of a scene in which the baby in the hospital demands to get back into his mother's womb, and the doctor is exposed performing a horrific surgery where he successfully returns the baby to the womb, Ito symbolically illustrates Freudian trauma. It leaves the mother turned into a bloodthirsty monstrosity in its wake, while the child escapes life's excesses.

Educational policy during the war years defined nature as a national family. After the Russo-Japanese War, the Ministry of Education started to publish hard-hitting boosters for patriotism and sacrifice in ethical texts published for school use.



The ninth-grade ethics text read: *“The state (kokka) exists independently forever but the individual only for a time and compared with the state his life is very brief. It is only natural that the people must conform to the purposes of the eternal state, and give no heed to personal interests.”* The view held that nature as family, nation, and culture was divorced from common life. By transcending the mundane, the naturalized nation left nature behind, leaving the quotidian as a kind of half-life, a prelude to individual death and national immortality (Thomas, 2001). The natural practice of worship no longer took place in the living communities, economic growth was not possible through the natural resources of local communities, and the true family and the true self were found not amidst the living, but through connections with the ancestral dead. After the Russo-Japanese War, the true ground of nature was not the soil and air of the living but that of the dead. The story ends in the Manga with the destruction of the entire physical space and the humans who have now become physically entangled with each other after contorting into spirals. Their dead bodies lie on top of a mystical landscape of spirals as if they have become one with nature. Upon the initial destruction of the town, its geography and built elements merge into a giant spiral that no humans can escape. The last survivors note that the “eternal spiral” referring to the ruins; was building itself even though its creators were gone, it was emitting a mesmerizing light that invaded the survivor; the eternal spiral was ancient and at the same time had a life of its own. It draws upon elements of ecohorror, body horror, and cosmic horror to connect elements of biology, environment, and cosmology. In a way, this intertwining of nature resembles the construction of harmony with nature that characterized imperial ideology in which an abstract form of nature consumed all and everything in the ultra-natural-national state.



Resurrecting Artefacts



April was the cruellest month for those who still lived; now the blooming crimsons could only sprout nightmares of dead lovers and children. The land was ripe with the voices of sorrow; their pain; the terror of their experiences; their subjectivities tendered the soil. Their names, the lives they had lived and valued before; were written off of history but from their miserable fates a powerful artefact was resurrected—the memory of ruins. Ruins evoke potent emotions of loss and remind us of the very ephemerality of nations, civilizations, and life itself. Ruins as artefacts whether they are passed down as folklore, books, monuments, or images; have been politically, culturally, and historically significant. During the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, the ruins left behind were used to convey the bitter feeling that followed when the government accepted terms far short of what people expected. A sense of uncompensated sacrifice was left in public memory by the post-war depression, war debt, and the return of war-mutilated soldiers. In "Manchuria March," the hit song of 1932, was suggested with a verse that made Manchuria into a national monument to the Russo-Japanese War dead:

*Look over at the war memorial,
There are the bones of our heroes,
Dead in the war between Japan and Russia,
Are long buried.
Stained with a red river of blood,
The evening sun shines upon it,
Soaring high over the endless plain.*

The Japanese imagination viewed Manchuria as a national (family) graveyard; the "river of blood" symbolized Japan's claim to Manchurian soil. Defending the Manchurian lifeline was also framed in terms of the blood debt owed to the Russo-Japanese War generation. On the other hand, the Sino-Japanese War (1937) was

remembered for the Nanjing Massacre known as the “forgotten holocaust” which similarly evoked a great sense of tragedy and loss and the stories were passed down for generations. Iris Chang in her book, *The Rape of Nanjing* (1997) recalls:

*They never forgot the horrors of the Sino-Japanese War—
—They particularly did not want me to forget the Rape of Nanjing. Neither of my parents witnessed it, but as young children, they had heard the stories, and these were passed down to me.*

Her book is another artefact. The graphic details of the atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army in Nanjing which the reader is unlikely to forget; are of historical significance for the victims who did not receive justice in the approval of a new colonial conquest.



Conclusion



The Japanese rarely speak publicly about their past, this popular manga surprisingly exposes the anxieties of ruin associated with the ghosts of the natural ideology. In spite of the gruesome themes of this paper there is still some comfort in the fact that discontent existed within the all-consuming ideological state and there were still those within it who were able to resist the ultra-natural state from invading their souls even in the face of heavy political censorship and repression who then passed down their disquieting memories. In popular fiction, the horror genre reflects societal fears at the time content is produced. Junji Ito has admitted in interviews that he has grown up hearing stories about Imperial Japan. Although, multitudes of meanings can be interpreted in Ito's horror works; the ruins component in *Uzumaki* reveals it as a ruin artefact. In the same way that T.S Eliot's *The Wastelands* portrays the ruins of modern civilization, *Uzumaki* depicts the ruins of a natural ideology. Throughout the years, political forces have systematically curtailed discourse on the ruins of Imperial Japan, but those who lived through such times of terror passed on their anxieties, which now resurface in popular fiction as a reminder of nature's tyranny.





Combating Familiarity:



SHAYERI DAS

*Locating the Prodigal Calcuttan in Nabaneeta Dev Sen's 'Return
of the Dead'*

"Poetry is like war", Dev Sen wrote, "a war with oneself"- an intensely personal engagement, the yield of which ruthlessly exploits and inhabits the poetics of vulnerability in trying to accommodate the overt rawness of the emotions that Dev Sen sought space for in her lifelong creative undertaking. The poetry of Nabaneeta Dev Sen embodies a curious blend of emotions, the multifariousness of which offered to the poet, and subsequently the reader, a chance to explore and identify an abundance of thematic underpinnings.

It was through poetry, the unfailing coherence of her words, and the brutal honesty that she resorted to, that Nabaneeta sought to confront and articulate pieces of her life at junctures of turmoil and dissonance. In the light of her failing marriage with economist Amartya Sen, returning to Calcutta in 1974 as a single mother of two, Nabaneeta inadvertently sparked significant curiosity.

"When Ma came back as a young mother with two kids and a marriage that was falling apart, she was met with an awkwardness that she was not expecting," says Nandana in a conversation with Mandira Nayar. "Even in her liberal literary and social circle, no one knew anyone who had got divorced."

Dev Sen voices the brutality of her reception back home, the strangeness that characterized her homecoming in a familiar city that now appeared strangely unwelcoming, in her poem, 'Return of the Dead'- a conveyance that Nandana describes as "heartbreakingly lyrical". Nabaneeta was unrestrained in her expression of grief through her poetry- she laid herself bare, unabashed, and found little reason to do otherwise. "Why be ashamed of your tears?", Dev Sen asks in her poem 'Shame', another piece from Acrobat appearing in the section that Nandana names 'The Unseen Pendulum'.

'Return of the Dead' reveals acute desperation- the longing to belong, to be accepted and welcomed. Nabaneeta distills the emotions surfacing from her trials into vivid images of an aborted mother returning home from war, elated at the prospect of being received by her waiting lover. But to the lover, the city of Kolkata, the "childhood sweetheart", his "very own Nabaneeta" returns as a "familiar stranger". The poet is dismayed at the "anxious glances" that she is greeted with; as if her lover is reluctant- even apprehensive to receive her back into his "waiting arms". The poem communicates a unique sense of dislocation and search for identity- the poetry of estrangement that Dev Sen dealt with, illustrates her distinctive treatment of time and space.

The translator's objectivity plays an important role in the poem's interpretation. Originally the poem had been titled, "আমাকে তবে গ্রহণ করো, কলকাতা", which could be roughly translated to, "Receive me then, Kolkata". "The experience of translating her made me see her not only as my mother but as a woman going through all of these emotional challenges", Nandana said in an interview. It is perhaps also true that an intimate understanding of the author's material experiences was crucial in locating the poet in the liminal space between grief and the desire to reconnect with life- as the title does.

The poem incorporates themes manifold- womanhood, childbirth, and loss- themes that have recurrently been central to the poetry of Nabaneeta Dev Sen. Decoding Nabaneeta is simultaneously complex and uncomplicated at the same time. The poet scratches all falsehood in her poetic exercise, yet her alertness to the world around her and profound versatility are compelling and admissibly challenging to interpret exclusively. Admissible, because one can only do much to nurture an 'unwavering life partner'- the elusive, hard-backed 'kobitar khata'.





To Look Without Fear



A M I T S H A H

“Life breaks everyone.” (~Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms)

The researcher was explaining the ground rules of what seemed like a very easy exercise. I was to view a video for about a minute and then answer a series of questions. Easy-peasy.

The video furrowed into focus. Sets of young people, students, entered and exited from either end of the frame, carrying books, back packs, high fiving once in a while. The movements seemed like they were on a loop. Repetitious. I tried to look for patterns and pairings. The video ended.

After a quick few questions of did I see X and Y, which I answered correctly, the researcher asked, “Did you notice the theft of the backpack?” What??? There was a theft? Which corner of the frame? I had no clue. It was as if I had watched a different video from the researcher. She continued, “Did you see how the backpack was handled between the accomplice and the thief?” I GIVE UP!

If I couldn't notice what was in front of me a minute ago, I wondered about my memories of decades ago. What did I remember? Well, “truth” would be a word carved into stone at the bottom of the pedestal of a statue of someone sitting on a horse looking like he knew where he was heading. I don't know about THE TRUTH. I know of only mine. Mary Karr, the prom queen of memoirists had written: *“I once heard Don DeLillo quip that a fiction writer starts with meaning and then manufactures events to represent it; a memoirist starts with events, then derives meaning from them.”* (The Art of Memoir, 2015, p. xvii).

The padlock weighs at least three pounds, possibly more, solid metal. It can maim or kill a living creature if thrown with some force at a decisive angle. The key is long lost. The memory of where the padlock was used is also lost. I do remember my mother walking around the house with a jangling set of keys tied to the aanchal, the free drape of her saree over her shoulders. The house whose doors the padlock secured is also gone. I keep the padlock on a bookshelf in my apartment, over 7,700 miles from where it served its serviceable purpose.

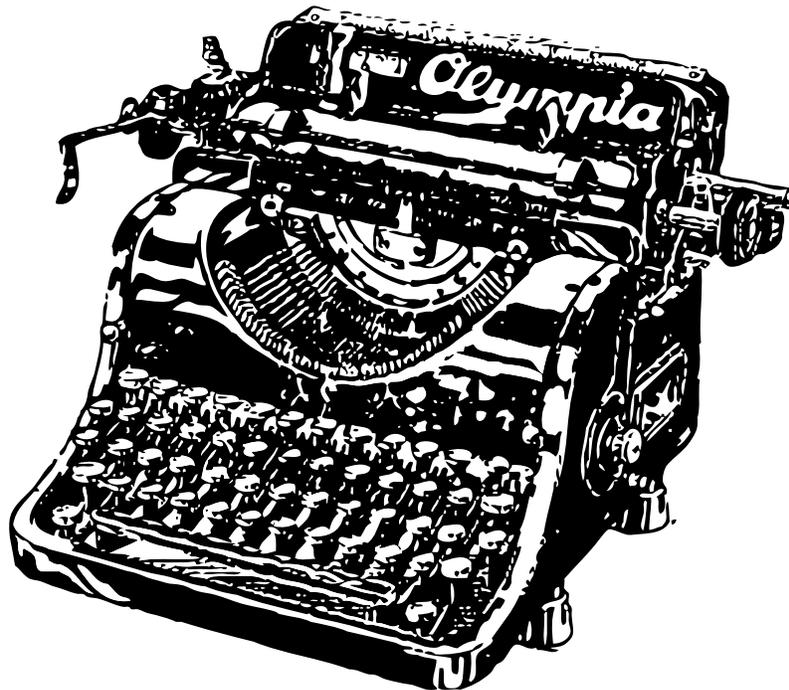
Why save an instance of memory? Of the millions and millions of memories that make a lifetime for most of us, why do we invoke and beseech some fragments? As in the psychology exercise that I mentioned above, much is forgotten and overlooked and in remembering some, almost unconnected, fragment unbolts a life that will surely vanish after I am dead.

Memory for ordinary people like myself, as contrary to the famous and the notorious, has a lifespan of a generation or two. My sons and their children probably won't be able to or even choose to revivify my meager holdings of memory. This fact, the loss of memories within a few generations, is new to me. It never occurred to me when my parents were alive forty years ago. Now, I wish I had the repository of tales within my reach. Saul Bellow, in a letter to Martin Amis, wrote that "losing a parent is something like driving through a plate-glass window. You didn't know it was there until it shattered, and then for years to come you're picking up the pieces — down to the last glassy splinter."

I tilt toward memories to reconsider, reappraise my life long past. I don't speak for others. Many who have suffered trauma and have no desire to revisit the dank darkness. The minor trauma that I experienced has taught me a bit, though decades later, of who I became. As a young boy, who felt helpless against a formidable parent, I remember shadowboxing in front of my bathroom mirror. I saw a fictional character in a movie recently, doing exactly that and for the same reason. I didn't know it then. I do now. I'm not that special. There's comfort in that. I belong to that cauldron of memories.

And all are not happy memories. The bone-crushing disappointments; the hypnotic anger; the comfortless sorrows. My friends provided me with some: Alaskan huskies licking a small girl's spectacles because she was just at that height; a prepubescent girl writing well-crafted sentences to her parents pleading her case to be taken home from summer camp; a young girl on a Mediterranean island realizing that the death of a classmate's father was due to political terrorism. A young boy who snipped his stepmother's long hair while she slept. My mother and I arguing over the cuff width of my trousers—eleven inches or twelve (this was in 1964)?

In a world that captures so many memories effortlessly through photographs, digital media, and audio files, why bother to harpoon moments idling in the deepest recesses of my mind? To remember, to affirm and accept is to live without fear, to countenance my life in all its fullness.





Conformations of Grief



A M I T S H A H

“Memory . . . is the diary we all carry about with us” (~ Oscar Wilde)

I

The open, tile-roofed porch, the baranda, the veranda, the porch, with a set of one-step stairs before the bricked courtyard, had a cement floor and a cement bench that was as high as an adult’s waist or more accurately in my memory, at head-level of my single-digit self. The bench and the floor in front of it was always spotlessly cleaned and scrubbed by hand by the household help. Yet, the brownish-black stains couldn’t be scrubbed away. They were the tobacco stains from my great-grandfather’s hookah bowls. He never saw them. He was blind by the time he lived in this cottage.

But did Lord Lytton see them? He visited on March 31st, 1925, a few months before my great-grandfather died. Lytton was the governor of Bengal and the following year he became the Viceroy of India for a brief period. Growing up, I was always told that the “Viceroy” visited. That’s how hagiographies are constructed. The only reason I have such accurate details is because of a photograph in a self-published book from the late 1920s, printed on rough paper, in Bengali, with a caption that identifies several people including Lytton and my great-grandfather.

And now, with the expansion of the road that saunters 380 miles from north of Kolkata to the port towns far south, on the eastern banks of the Hooghly River, the cottage is rubble, hauled away years ago.

I could see out the vertical steel-rod barred window, shuttered in green wood, from my bedroom onto the roof of the cottage and the two-lane road beyond. The house today is an “event center”, sold by the management of the historic school that my great-grandfather built, and will evaporate from any collective memory, as I’m the last of my family who lived there.

I never saw my great-grandfather. He died in 1925 at age 72. There are a few photographs of him. Nothing with his handwriting (before he was blind); no photographs of the cottage. Nothing that belonged to him except a medal that the British rulers gave him, Kaiser-i-Hind, sometime in the early 20th century for public service. I have it in a palm-sized, broken-hinged Kashmiri teakwood box that belonged to his grandson, my father, in which I have some medals that my father received and a pale green camera filter, an attachment for his beloved Zeiss Ikon, collapsible lens camera, which he bought in the early 1950s at Shannon Airport, Ireland, at the world’s first duty-free store.

“ The cradle rocks above an abyss, the common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness. Although the two are identical twins, man, as a rule, views the prenatal abyss with more calm than the one he is heading for (at some forty-five hundred heartbeats an hour). ”

(~ Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*)



II

I had two older sisters. One I grew up with, four years older than me. She died ten years ago. The other was seven years older. She died when she was a few months old. I never saw her. Ever. Not even a photograph. Nothing. Her name was Reena Archana. Reena for gem in Bengali and Archana for adoring. Her name has fallen out of favor worldwide (as there are Reenas in Hebrew and French, English, Greek, Italian, Japanese, and German). In 2020, only 1 out of 97,280 baby girls were named Reena. My parents never mentioned her. I asked a few questions of my mother but I was incapable of realizing at that young age that there might come a time when I'd be the last, the very last, person in the world who would care when Reena's birthday was.

She was my parents' first child. Born in 1943 (when? No idea) in a military hospital in north Bengal, 66 miles from Kolkata, in a place called Krishnagar, which is only three hours from where I grew up, on national highway (NH) 12. In 1943, there were no highways and you took your car on crudely built country ferries across the various river crossings. My parents did just that along with busloads of students and staff from the school for the blind (yes, visually impaired) who were being evacuated from the City after the Japanese managed to bomb the port, then a key link on China-Burma-India theater of operations for the Allied Southeast Asian Command based in Kandy, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to the south. The school campus in Kolkata was taken over by fire fighting and nursing services of the allied, British and American, forces.

The local prince's palace, called Rajbari, house of the raja, was where the blind school and its staff relocated. The prince had donated his house. I don't know how many children were born in Krishnagar in 1943 or how many were born at the military hospital where Reena was born. My mother said they named their first-born after the English nurse who delivered her. Now that's what I repeat. And that's what my grandson will know. History after all is fish on a fishmonger's table, sliced and diced by those who do the dicing.

The war certainly put the pincers on my parents in terms of what they could own and afford. But I find it hard to imagine that my father, such an energetic photographer and my mother with her first child didn't save anything. I think my mother told me that my dad sold his camera for cash but no photographs of their first child? Then again, I wasn't there. Reena developed an illness after a routine vaccination and died. There were no Christian burial grounds for the "natives" in Krishnagar. Reena is buried, I was told, in an unmarked grave in the military cemetery reserved for the colonizers.

I will visit Krishnagar. I will say I'm sorry. Silently. To my parents. For an agony that is unfathomable.

"I know why we try to keep the dead alive: we try to keep them alive in order to keep them with us."

(~ Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*)



III

Finding your compartment on Indian railways trains in 1969 was an exercise in agility and muscle power if you were alone. You didn't have electronic boards telling you what the compartment number was per your seat allocation. You had to find the hand-written form that was attached to the side of the compartment as the train rolled into the station. People took their positions on the platform having good prior intel about compartment numbers. For the rest, there was a scrum of bodies—porters with luggage, your brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles---yelling, directing, admonishing and spurring you to the correct spot.

In March 1969, the Indian Railways inaugurated a deluxe train service. It had three levels of reserved chair-car seats in air-conditioned compartments along with full dining car service. To us, this was heaven, though now I think of it as Amtrak on the Northeast Regional run. The service was called Rajdhani Express (Raj = royal and dhani =destination). The first track was Kolkata to Delhi, 906 miles and taking about 17 hours. The speed listed was at 80-85 mph but I think it never reached max speed plus there were long stops at major towns.

I was 19 that summer and headed back to Delhi to start my third and final year of college. Classes started in July. At around five in the evening my dad waved me off and I hopped into the seating car. Remember, this was 1969. I had longish hair but nothing very long. I did have bell-bottoms and a Nehru jacket, unbuttoned and a button on my lapel with a peace symbol and "Make Love Not War" in bold black lettering. The 45s and 78 rpms were "Touch Me" by the Doors; "Get Back " by the Beatles; "Honky Tonk Woman" by the Stones; "Sugar, Sugar" by the Archies. What did my parents make of all this???

That May, a group of landless laborers in a small village, Naxalbari, at the foothills of the Himalayas, in northern-most Bengal, in Darjeeling district, clashed with the police and landlords' militias after some farmers were killed soon after the landless refused to give up the harvest, which at that time was a rapacious 80-20 split against the sharecroppers. The wreathing of events, political and social, are concatenate and I'll

be doing grievous injustice by trying to describe it in a few words. But know that the ground shifted for many of us. A new revolutionary party formed; it was banned soon after and its followers were going into hiding, going underground, joining the landless. A generation suddenly in motion it seemed to some of us. Violence was blinding and so was the resistance . . . for a time . . . for a brief time . . . lightning sparkled the night sky and cries of the red dawn were sheer poetry.

So, there I was giving the compartment of filled seats the once-over. My college buddies weren't the only ones headed out of Kolkata. There were the girls. Girls who went to all-women's colleges named Miranda House (MH), Lady Shri Ram (LSR) and Indraprastha (IP). I would've said "women" today but we really were "boys" and "girls", so very young and cocksure.

To this day I have no recollection how I got into the seat next to a young woman. How we started talking. And about what. All I remember is that she lived in Delhi and was visiting her father in Kolkata. Her parents were separated (but in those days these things weren't expressly spelled out in India). She had a friend with her. Someone who'd recently moved from Kolkata to Delhi and they were in the same college. LSR. In south Delhi. We were both studying history. I was in the north campus, the other end of town. By the end of that train journey we were friends. In fact, she was my first romance. She died when she was 22. I had left India by then. I have no photographs. No letters. No nothing. I did pull a photo off the Web a few years ago when her high school named a debating championship in her name. Yes, she was a good debater. Her friend is still my friend.

“ Here I must turn around and go back and on the way back look carefully to the left and to the right.

For when the spaces along the road between here and there are all used up, that's it.”

(~ Galway Kinnell, “The Road Between Here and There”)





Moonlight Lament



DEBOSMITA BISWAS

Moon man, Moon man, wait for me.
I lost my way, I tripped and fell,
Forever leaving, forever eluding
Moon man, Moon man,
Leaving, Leaving; ...won't you stay?

I ask my Father, Why did you leave?
Must you, too; like Moon man did?
I remember being angry, cranes flew
away,
Moon man, Moon man,
I wish you stayed.

The sun is ablaze, azure sky.

Moon man, Moon man,

I lost my way.

Northern star is a myth in day;

Shadowing earth, your willful way.

Moon man, Moon man,

Why won't you stay?

The night is young, indigo haze;
I drink moonshine, like arms in laze.
The night is young, I see you peak—
A hint of orb, like dandelion breeze.

Moon man, Moon man,

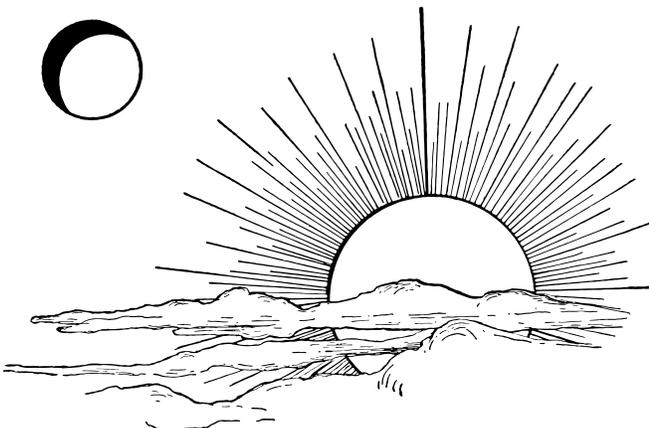
I lost my way.

Moon man, Moon man,

Forever leaving, forever eluding

Moon man, Moon man,

Leaving, Leaving; ...won't you stay?





love is a gecko on the wall



S I V A W R I G H T

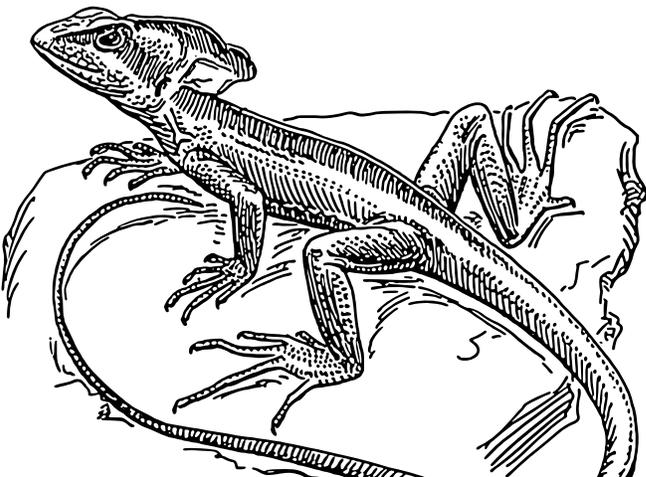
there is a gecko
in my room
high up
on the wall
beyond my reach

he lives there
catching anything
that moves
in his vision
making a fool of himself
now and then
but still
beyond my reach

he comes down
at times
if something catches his eye
i believe

he does see me
in his periphery
so he remains
beyond my reach

there is a gecko
in my room
i feed him
a mosquito or two
and i do like him
from far away
and i believe
he likes me too
from far away
high up on the wall
just beyond my reach



Our Staff.

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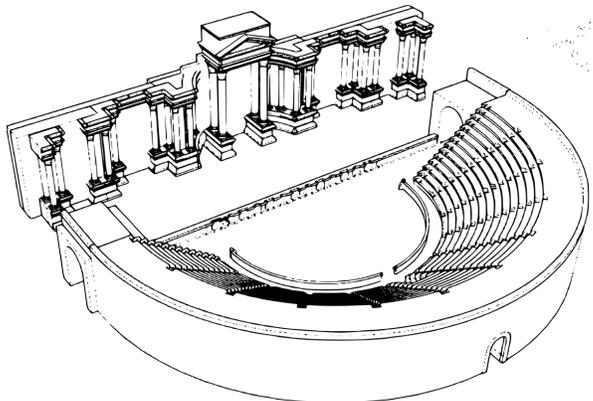
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