

One

Gratia gratum faciens...

Thomas' words echo around Æthelberht's seat,
lost exhortations to the ebb and flow on the
cobble bridge where frightened witches once wept.

Hollow bodies gabble past the old wet stool,
selfish, replete with base desires, full of pleasures,
while other shadows struggle above this drowning pool,
a barely felt breeze, ignored in equal measure.

Wearing smug smiles or the ingrained grit of pain,
they are where they are
because they have been what they have been.
Nil gratia gratum faciens.

Hissing beneath their feet, the serpent twisting
in the ancient artery smells the disgrace
as these empty vessels jostle without a glance
at lowly souls with hungry bowls, like pigs
scoffing at the trough without a moral base.

Two

Gratia gratis data...

It takes a village to raise a child,
but these wonderful vessels lie on broken stones,
and full of sand, struggle to grow measured and mild.

Caged without and caged within. Wrong place. Wrong time.
Exhaust shrieks from out-sized anuses on their
sham-value cars, silvered rims glinting, boys in their prime.
Harsh jungle beats boom behind darkened windows,
proclaiming hidden threats to make new widows.
Nil gratia gratis data.

Feeling excluded from Established respect,
miserable hearts congeal, anger is spat.
Rejecting the norm, rejecting the old,
their scarred hands grip hard in aggressive holds
of comradely suffering. Cold eyes colour
with angry flames as they watch their village burn,
desiring warmth, angry again after their turn.

Unseen in the scene. Invisible drives equip
remorseless fists with ugly power to hit
and take glory in the power of their strife.
Cold hearts whispering of things to be done,
become visible for their moment, and
Something happens. Someone loses their life.
Feeling yet despised. Feeling yet denied.
Lying there on the street, one of their friends has died.

Screaming with nobody listening, scared for their turn,
feeling safe in their cars while adrenaline burns.
Glaring in pain, the violence insane,
they can't listen with the transmission set to maim.
If they open their doors and visit tonight,
cower in fright...
they're in cars.

Three

Achinta!

Those eyes glare one seventh of their hate of survival,
ruthlessly lashing six sevenths against a rival.

Bheda!

In their malebogia no man is made a brute,
but through Nature can become one, when both the mind
and the belly are empty and rage burns in their roots.

Abheda!

We are the same in the differences of our Pride.
Primitive fears scream behind our eyes, a legacy
that thousands of intelligence genes in shame can't hide.
While we deny the cruel nature of tooth and claw,
deep inside the animal roars.

I saw him sat in the hay, where the sun was shining,
a hazy grey shadow, silent as they stood laughing.
His smouldering coals watching, serenely judging,
waiting, testing me, tense, when suddenly muscles flare,
and in deadly grace shifts, stabbing with a dreadful glare.
Controlled steps reveal his power, like nuclear fission,
restrained, drilling deep into my soul and asking
why we had done this, what was the reason?

We break Cipolla's Third Law even as we worry
about making machines that obey Asimov's three.
The number of stupid people is legion, and we
confuse high stupidity with high ability.
There is no art in stupidity, all can do it.
Playing the game of stupidity, we take the hit,
Wondering why our angry children turn against us,
laughing with a grimace, as they stab and rob, and shoot,
and drop their souls into the furnace.

Four

With nothing, devolving, that heroic little monkey
squatting in the trees, telling us there is nothing more
important than education, nothing more to be.
In faith he is judged by the Legion, placing God
as his second, juggling all their lives in his film noir.
'Et Blair, plus secret, comme en sa tour d'ivoire.'

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Consuming in excess, gorging at their scoffing trough,
Privilege eats a caviar and pudding death,
while the dying donkey is clowning on wine and figs.
All the while they have none, like lesser animals, rough.
Their fire must out, and so the village holds it breath,
while outside in the night frightened children burn like twigs.

From one general law we are compelled to multiply,
to vary, to let the strongest live and the weakest die.
But we are no longer the monkey and sing to reason.
For all people there are chances, for all a season.
There is time to be happy, and time to be human,
we can try harder and build that village for our children.

(c) Lee Russell: 31/1/2018