

## The New Light

The light that I have so long loved turns  
its gaze grudgingly from the old view  
of islands, from enfolding valleys  
waking from their sleep, dew  
dangling at each morning's edge, testing  
the gravity of calyx, leaf and stem;  
turns from villages at night cupping  
their candles in procession down a mountain,  
a girl's giggle muffled in the forest's throat;  
turns from the benediction of the ocean which absolves  
even as it embraces, washing colonial guilt  
like seaweed from unrepentant beaches.

Now the dream is draining from the shadows  
in the valleys, edges hardening  
in disgust as the light grows  
into a harsh, uncompromising glare.  
The sun is turning cynical, taking  
its morning tally in the tarnished air  
like a complacent prison warden twisting  
an ochre thumbprint into Kingston's face.  
The light cannot erase its new reflection—  
at dawn an albino hawk circling  
a feeding tree, wing tipped with gold,  
the glint of a grin from the muzzle of a gun  
as a black Clint Eastwood surveys the killing field  
and runs that fable through another version.

This is the light that scars the earth,  
a scrutiny that withers myth  
and cauterizes pain. Wordsworth  
could not survive a squint at it. Pan  
has swapped his flute for an amplifier  
blasting fifteen hundred watts but after  
all the questions a rumour lingers.  
In the city's bursting funeral parlours  
the corpses glow at night, nimbus of blue  
acetylene burning the darkness under the roof,  
lighting up the windows, crunch of gristle, bone and sinew  
as a foot curls into a cloven hoof.

To keep the secret they are buried in their boots  
but under the leather the light still glows, even  
as coarse, wet hair begins to sprout  
over the ankles and along the shin.

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