

Shijo Varghese

Gogmagog's Leap¹

He did not leap
He was hurled down
Twelve feet tall and huge
He couldn't even be moved
Corineus killed him
The right hand
Of Brutus—this God's Anointed

God said, "Kill
The giants, invade
The land and rule"
And they killed them
And established Peace
Till they found Gogmagog
The largest of the natives

He was dumb
For he never spoke
In their Language
And savage
For they saw he was He
Bare and unarmed
But they detected the invisible Atom
Throbbing to explode
Beneath his Tongue

Cruelty copulated with horror

In the course of time
The Fist came out
Bursting Mother
(Later he killed Father)
He tried Gogmagog when
He was fast asleep in his cave
With his children
And convicted him
Of war and penury

So they gathered their arms
Marched to the cave
Through the spider-hole
Saw him sleeping

They swarmed over him
Tied him to his cot
Plucked his Unknown Tongue
Blinded him of his Visions
Lowered him to their shoulders
And carried him to the heath
Where Corineus waited
Striped like a cat
Stars in his eyes

(And Brutus sat under a Bush watching)

The contest began
Gogmagog freed his hands
Broke Corineus'
Three Ribs
Two on the right and one on the left
Infuriated, Corineus
Heaved the giant with his cot
Onto his shoulders
Ran to a cliff
Hurled the monster (could he?)
Far out into the sea where
He was dashed into
A thousand fragments
Staining the water with his blood

His Young grew up

Some were killed
Some died in prison
Some were tamed and
Used to pull their chariots
New Gogmagogs were born
They live in caves
Some are hurled down
Some leap
To the sea

A toad in the English class

With sores and blisters
Jumping and leaping
Against the concrete wall
Till someone gently collected and carried it
In the palanquin of a dustpan
Back to the backyard

Sleepwalker

In the night, my watch ticking away
My heart's rhythm to the morrow
I woke up with stiffness
Between my thighs
The bladder, you know, must release
The tension of my supper's buttermilk

I don't believe urinals
Hypocrites, clad in white robes
They sieve out everything
Leaving bubbles and stench

I am afraid of trees
Trees, black monsters, conspirators
Whisper against me in the night
Because in my every pilgrimage
To library and back to hostel
I piss deep at their roots;
The roots, you know, are very sentimental

In the night, my watch shifting
Its motion to my heart's rhythm
I stopped
The wind breathing stopped
The trees whispering stopped
And I saw
A ghost
Gosh, a ghost!
Pale as moon with meteorite impressions
Eyes swollen with unkind sleep
(Just out of bed like me?)
A ghost indeed, still

A breeze gushed
To change its stance
My tension released through the stiffness
But, you know, one doesn't sweat then

Grinning in melancholy
It spiralled and spiralled
Into a whirligig
Vanished through the pores of my hide
Leaving its pale hue and dry veins
Impressed on a plantain leaf
Dancing in the wind's breath

Note

1. In his *Historia Regum Britianniae*, Geoffrey of Monmouth narrates the (pseudo)historical account of how Brutus, banished after the Trojan War settles down in the island of Britain, which is named after him. He along with Corineus, the legendary hero of Cornwall, annihilated the native giants. Gogmagog was the biggest and the strongest of them all who resisted till all others were killed. The place where Gogmagog was hurled down to death came to be known as 'Gogmagog's Leap.'