

Sofiul Azam

Home Away from Home

(for Dom Moraes 1938-2004)

1.

That year I inched towards the alchemy of words
and the delicious feel gluttons desire against the palate
and the thirst for the purity I can't have even after toil,
I started leafing through *My Son's Father*¹ and later

*Never at Home*² to be devoured by a worm like me;
you pretended your cry of absence was presence.
We took refuge in what people call a fool's paradise;
how aptly did I drawl my vowels by similitudes!

In my country stripped of the lush green it had,
you saw the tempest within³ rising out of blood.
Strange that we hardly see Time's rot shut against us
and the scavengers feasting on the flag won by lives.

Spoils they believe in are agents for dislocation;
our art is an imaginary home away from home.

2.

The miracles that a prodigal like you did took me
by surprise, those of poetry rising in a home away
from the home you left to remake elsewhere; I know—
in our blood lies everything's decline cold as frost.

The vocabulary I had from the disorienting muse
did never lull me to sleep, defying the clamour

¹ *My Son's Father* is Dom Moraes' first autobiography, and mostly dealt with his early scribbling in verse and his literary activities in the British poetic milieu.

² *Never at Home* is his second autobiography, which focuses on his poetic career, the long-term lack of poetic epiphany and the various kinds of professional jobs in his later life.

³ *The Tempest Within* is his book of journalistic writings on the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

of absence, and of the sly urges to outlive the ruins
of the home some fifty years later or even more.

Never at Home: that's the way it was until now:
you Donski a skeleton buried in your Indian grave—
the final earth-bound home you settled into at last.
Be assured you won't be haunted by nightmares

nor even by all that guilt in never being at home—
the falsifiers use it to force us out of our places.