

Name Him ~ If You Must

Across the ages,
we have feared him,
his face smeared with the ash of the hearth
and his body dancing in the shadows of the tree line.

At times, he is seduction and deception,
as elusive as the pulsing firelight.
At times, he is terror and dominance,
as substantive as the roaring sea.

But we evolved.
Clever scribblers, we became.

Our words painting a vivid image,
malevolent and crafty,
his personage materialized,
matching our own sophistication.

For the simple mind, he remained as real,
as fearsome and virile.
For the not so simple,
they simply forgot that it was they who made him.

Their words echoed from their own writings
and reflected back into their ears and eyes
from the polished marble halls
and the brilliant pages of their holy scrolls.

It can't be,
they said,
that we created such a wondrous
and terrible myth.

Were he not real,
he could not have survived
through all these epochs,
and all these many cultures.

Alas,
you say.
Those are ages past,
you say.

No need we have, to keep the masses in check.
Empowered are we, in this age of commerce,
of science and reason,
with great freedoms of religion and thought.

In those ages past, did he:

Pit us one against the other?
Yes.

Teach us that we needn't think for ourselves?
Yes.

Blind our eyes to despots?
Yes.

Dazzle our desires and turn our heads away from the simple truths within us?
He did.

And in these doings, we have turned
and strode down that road of envy and fear,
the one that leads to anger,
then leads to hate,
then violence,
and finally that violence that begets great violence and many deaths.

But now his myth is dead.
Is it not?

Whether myth, or real,
or spirit, or fallen angel,
or just a metaphor for our own base nature,
this meme is the enemy.

If in our mind, we must give him a face,
be very aware that it is a changing face
that takes constant retouching
from the hand of that ever inspired
and industrious artist within us.

For not only is this meme the enemy,
it is as threatening to truth and life
as it ever was,
and thrives as surely as it ever did.

If truth will thrive in you,
and caring will be in your nature,
you must know well,
this adversary's character and face.

So think, and reject what you will of my brush strokes.
And reject what you will from cultures and religions of old.
But be sure to take in hand your own brush,
and make your own strokes.

For in this very mutable world
we must constantly ask the questions
that define the evils in our universe.

When we villainize a whole religion or culture,
do we not give that image life?

When we substitute meaningful exchange
between thoughtful people,
with the consumptive drivel crafted for the masses,
do we not give that image life?

When we make ourselves and our friends,
a community that is less accepting,
a group that is more exclusive,
a fellowship that is fearful of others,
then do we not give that image life?

Even when we plant little seeds
into the minds of our children,
seeds of non-acceptance of those different,
seeds of derision as humor,
seeds of competitive violence in the name of sport,
and all the others that we would deny,
then do we not give that image life?

We choose every day
the vibrancy of that visage,
as we choose just how ethereal and frightening,
that face can be.

But, when we seek and bolster
the caring in our brothers,
such a light,
shows the image as illusory and inanimate.

If that face is a personage,
in such light,
he is dead.

When we walk among foreigners and they become our friends,
he is dead.

When we turn our face openly on the human needs of others,
he is dead.

When we cast rays of honest discussion into the dark corners of our minds,
he is dead.

In our hearts,
though sometimes fleeting,
we know this.

But great courage is required
if we are to know it every day
in that place where
we speak and share our lives.

And so, let us respect that ancient human wisdom
that gives a face and name,
that gives voice and animation
to what is evil in us.

But most importantly,
let us summon the courage
to illuminate our own evils
so that they become powerless.

Only then, may we turn our face and stride the other path.
Only then, will others recognize our face, as fully human.

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