

## Outside the democracy of circumstance

He chose to stop. He just stopped. There. He initially paused, but the pause seemed to last longer than it should have and having gradually become content with his decision not to move, he decided that this constituted stopping. However, he had been so aware of this transition, this decision, that he could no longer recall what prompted this prolonged lack of movement.

So he began to look around, to try and find a clue. He asked himself if anything made a strange sort of sense. But everything just made a familiar sort of sense. He cursed a little for making the wrong decision. He desperately wanted for something to not make sense. Nothing here seemed worth stopping for. There were no clues just a couple of dubious looking flower buds sitting uncomfortably underneath a bush. Or was it an undersize tree? Unclear as to what may determine size in a context such as this, the small man asserted that the bush, or the tree, depending on how you looked at it definitely had a presence that was socially awkward, and for the flowers at least, a presence that was somewhat threatening.

He started to wonder why he should be so inherently compelled to side with the flowers, after all, there were two of them and it were they who had chosen to live in such precarious conditions. As the small man began his wondering he became aware of a change, a shift of something, in something, around something, there was a lot of... movement. He looked down again and suddenly the two flowers seemed to be floating, buoyant on an effervescence that bordered on arrogance,. the awkward tree now appearing still and quiet in comparison.

A closer look at the tree revealed a pervading discomfort from within it, an unease that seemed to zigzag through every branch, every leaf.

Upon this discovery a warm glow lifted the small man's chest elevating his mood as he realised that this was why he paused, why he took the time to stop - it was because of this tree! Under the shadow of the clouds the tree's vulnerabilities had strangely become visible. The lack of shadow somehow emphasised a new aura, it highlighted a new aesthetic that forced it to reveal hidden insecurities.

It became clear that the tree's awkwardness had been crafted from the leaking residue of a hundred or so years of false confidence. Underneath this proud veneer there was unhappiness so manifest, born from an insecurity so potent, so acute that its discovery forced the small man to question the validity of his own make up, his own appearance. He began to wonder how the tree saw him, how the grass upon which he was kneeling felt about his demeanour - whether the mountains ahead of him saw him as considerate, compassionate, genuine; qualities he took pride in.

Quickly, he felt a brief spell of guilt upon realising his joyous reaction to the tree's misfortune. Was this proof of his own insecurity? Did he himself think so

little of himself that he needed to witness suffering in order to feel someone of worth?

He began to regret his decision to stop, were he to have stuck to just a pause he would have just sensed this, he wouldn't have known it, he wouldn't have had to time to dwell, to be ultimately forced to question the validity of his very identity.

He rapidly readdressed his introspection and tried to console himself in the fact that the flowers were in a position unique to an object of their stature, and that this is the way of the world – that something suffers in order for something to else to gain, and all over the world there are trees that have placed themselves above the clouds where they stand proud, asserting their posture over the small plants in their shadow, vulnerabilities hidden, a thing of myth. Instead they applaud their view as if it were for them, proud recipients of a moving image cleverly designed to boost esteem.

He was pleased, this worked, it was a temporarily sufficient redirection of thought that he was proud of - he had forgotten about how the mountains and the grass may feel about him, he had forgotten even about the tree - he no longer cared. The flowers were no happy, so he told himself, and that is the thought he took away with him on his journey up the mountain. All he knew was that he wanted to find a tree above the clouds somewhere where he too could sit and applaud.