Tich

Initially it was learning about the poppers that the artist visitor would be attaching and un-attaching that brought to mind the green satin dress. A birthday gift- 5th? In Dehra Dun, in the house with the gravelled path and courtyards. Our stopping point, staying with an uncle and aunt before joining my father in New York. Did the dress have poppers? All I know for sure is that we called them tich buttons. Tich tich tich tich. The sound that accompanied perfection. Grownups had button holes and buttons, hooks and eyes… But for children, it was the tich button that held together polka dots and flowers and stripes and blocks of solid sunshine colours, wrapping the days of present certainties and futures rich with excitement and anticipation. A year later, how different my first border crossing was to the perilous travels of the children in the news today. How deep the sadness at leaving a particularly dear cousin, his figure, the closing gate, growing smaller as the horse drawn tonga pulled us away towards stations and airports. And how much more tragic the war torn goodbyes of today's news; yesterdays news; tomorrow's news. Tich tich tich tich.

The inside, the outside, hosts and guests, guests and hosts. I must leave one of my guests outside. This is the understanding. I must not do what I personally, culturally, creatively am screaming to do, which is to ask them both in. I do not know how to do this unwelcoming welcoming; I set out water and juice and biscuits for both- they do not accept them, they are busy, one working, one being. I must accept the borderline between them, and between them and me.

A week later a thought dawns. Should I have rebelled? Should I have insisted on bringing both in? But the messages were clear, the instructions plain. Only one. Who sits and weaves a slow tich tich rhythm in which I gratefully immerse myself. I manage to forget Sogol outside, sitting in the uneven garden. At first I had thought I might use the 20 minutes to draw the green dress, recall its sleeves and evoke its sheen with oil pastel textures; but the exquisite silence between the slow unravelling and re connecting of the popper tape draws me into a different space; I record each tich with a green mark on the paper between my watercolour paper; rows of ten emerge, straight in a hand drawn way. For some rows I look at the artist instead of my page. The marks become more meandering, and are hemmed in by subsequent straighter ones. A basket pattern is revealing itself, tich by tich, from the popper's performance.

As [name] prepares to leave, I roll the drawing up and place it in her hands. I had thought I might give it to Sogol who had been outside. Was I inventing new rules in thinking I shouldn't? I am strangely at peace and strangely unsettled by the whole experience. It has made me think of borders and visas and my complicity with who enters and who does not, about privilege and creative license, and personal goodbyes and the streams that bind and flow from our lives. My visitors leave from the back door. Out of habit I go the front door to see them off. They do not look back. I do not know if they are aware that I send blessings as they walk quietly away.

Ranjana Thapalyal

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Response to a performance of *Hosts and Visitors* on 8 July 2016.