



Poems by Kerem Durdag

SONGS FOR THE FOOLS OF ZEN

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Vapor

it is in the darkness
where you melt away
to thin vapors of silent
misgivings only to fall
back onto the bed,
your skin now rain,
your voice now a blue
circular streak spiraling
into the sky on my
chest and to each other
we say it is dark and
harder to love

you sit up, part the
curtain to let the moon
see us in our shame
the shame handed down
to us, in so much dark
with a single slit of light
your back is cleaved
into a chasm into which
I could dive with a luggage
of questions and a marble
hand that finds yours

the breast moves in its
shadow, my thighs rest
into the old earth, where the
grass is brown, the trees
refuse to pick you up, and
my shoulders bleed red only
to become turquoise
in that light where there is
a glimmer of rescue I wait
for my shoulders to turn
violet so that if I can succeed
in holding you I will blend
into the rims of the chasm
on the other side of which
the breast is in its shadow
your legs arc into a sword
slicing my tongue all over
the room in the dark

where there is sweat from
the moans on the walls
where eyes don't see
ears hear more than they need
to, there is no place
to hide, and I don't know
the time because my foot
pulled the plug as part
of my orgasm
we are lost, we know it,
the curtain drops on its knees

toppling over the moon
smashing the light into a million
shards, we scratch our envy
for angels by singing songs of
desperation, rebellion, kicking
ass, kissing our children, anger,
rest, in the grayness of
hope my lips become a
neck, fingers break on
cliffs of hips
I want to yell out so
that the neighbors know
what we are doing

doing it in a lick of silence
breaking as foam on sands of
screaming meditation, warriors
belonging to no war, dancers begging
on pedestals of broken statues for
music of darkness & light, somewhere
at the edge of the precipice and doubt
I see resurrection of salvation
of the blood of all the Jesus's on
wooden crosses, hidden faces gaining
shape on our breath, the tangle
of our hair covering dreams of
tomorrow, today has dissolved
we have arrived at no
destination, rescue is not
at hand, our hands
are holding onto arms bare
with tire and smiles
where horizon begins and ends,
heaven crashes without
a din and the devil apologizes
for evil, over the vista
of kisses and wandering on
deserts that have long names

I tell her I love her
as she nods.

What gets to you at the end of the day

for Guzin Evren

We wash our dead and our hands
melt into the water sliding off the
world that is no more. And you &
I are quiet. Above us our angels have
deserted our prayers and I am asking you
if I can fill your soul to the brim; where
are all the dead going? If one day my
blood will anoint the flesh of those
who cry in their sleep, for kindness to
my father, then I am yours to
hold and kiss till I drop in exhaustion.
I am turning around under the
tornado of calm, making love to a
woman whose past is coffee to me,
hard and strong to forget. Somewhere
under the lip of the nude horizon, I want
to put my hand through your hair and
say, my sister where will we rest.
You will flame into laughter and
remember on whose grave you held
the earth of your dreams, that mist
of rain in your soul which wets my
shoulders. For all the dead and tears,
we will kiss and wonder if we can
go on till the end of the day,
jumping into a kind of hurt which
has a name: desire. There is
blood on my hands Guzin, blood
who some say drips into words
for me. My eyes tell me how you
faint for the people who have
no blood left to give; that is the
forest where your river meets my
ocean and red becomes blue.
The sick are screaming for you
and I am running over people, over
those slow bureaucrats, to hold
them and say, my sister will
save you. We are in a rush,
leaving Karachi so far behind making
it whimper into silence. So shall we
go back? But you & I are in the
business of salvation, we will save
and not asked to be saved. Dust clogging
our nostrils, these people are the
dust from the clay that is now
dry, but don't worry there is still
water in our palms. Karachi is
the knife that has gone through
our rib cage - leave it there.

Across the whip burns of so many years
I want to touch your skin. You
and I are surrounded by corpses,
it will be madness for us to become
corpses too because when we were kids
we said to each other, there is life
in both of us. I want to hold your
hand, raze down fatigue, shout
to the idiots who rather forget us
and pull you over to the sidewalk,
away from the traffic and write
on your spine, when our day ends
the world would have found us at last.

It is midnight and clear on your
chest. Raise your neck so I can see
your profile in the light of a room
where we lost our innocence without
knowing or complaint. Outside Karachi
hums and I am thinking of Ankara -
there is death and flickering street
lights; night is same everywhere.
The question still remains: where
will we rest? I know the answer, which
I can tell you tomorrow at dawn.

Magic for the blind

faith is a rambling love song which kills the wind in your lungs, makes you lunge for the absent glass of air, and all you can see are the traffic lights cutting your night into three, making you forget the string over the chasm you walk on; it is cruel and quick to jab, hasten to open the door & it leaves a fragrance of hate, of that yearning for longing, the blood on your shoulders carrying the dust from the graves of countless holocausts, a cry for help, a scream for blindness and faith is a numb corpse kissing you on your cheek, saying it is o.k. to be lost, it is o.k. to be forgiven, give us the guilt, take the sin, blow into the spirit and clay, lick the wounds, take the chair upon that I have bred my sweat and you see your children running away into the future, your mother and father cut down in a hail of bullets by the past, you are stuck here for good where your body is aching because you have crawled so many miles under so many skins wanting a sip of water, a touch of a careful hand, the slap of gentle & kind dream, you look and look, your eyes stab your skull into a million pieces and bombs burst like napalm on paper under your scalp, you want to help, you want to belong, you want to grasp the meaning painting your soul black & gray, freedom is carved onto your chest but it disappears in the morning, dampness grows under your nostrils with your breath not your own but that of the devil's, so this is the crush, the crack of bones, the splintering of nails of iron and flesh, the breaking of the teeth, the loss of love, you are ready for the city, for the streets of shame, for the hustle bustle, rattle & hum, for suspicion and detonation, for the meager ration demanding desperation, there is the rape of frustration together in a mist carrying compassion welded to your forehead but the needle of that compass is not even pointing to your legs, the darkness of hope, that is it, what you have wanted to say, the darkness of hope, you come out of the room dreaming the elevator door is opening & closing by itself, the elevator is full of buckets filled with words, alphabets, letters, nuances, space of chances, satisfaction, your heart is somewhere else, not in between the cracks of falsity of your own face, there is the betrayal of the dream, the elevator now works, the door is shut, locked out now your voice refuses to sing, where is the subway to hell? hold on for the last dance, hold on to the real wings of desire, angels becoming human & gods from your confusion of clarity flying into solid walls of your other desires, sky is collapsing into the dirt, split like peas your ground is no more, fly, fly till you break into a million glances of hunger, of the tortures of the mind, rip your lungs for her, for him, for the child whom you want back, break, break, crash & foam over the oceans of disappointment, wash your mouth with lust & sin, early, it is still early, hold on to the hand, hold on to me, swim till you drown & monuments crumble on the mention of your deeds & the dead, bleed, bleed for laughter and for the heaven that is no more, hell is on us and you have to laugh, enter to the known to grab the unknown that is the motto of lunatics, swallow the hurt my friend, cry the tears which you never shed, for the water in your veins you never freed, scream for the justice of your soul without the damn lawyers, damn the damnation, rumble till there is no light for you in the way, till the darkness swallows itself for your love, till the bed is soiled and wet, the battle was never won & the war was never started, cannons and machine guns melted to iron ore in your flames, leave, leave, close the gap over the chasm, chasm, ride the waves on the spirits of horses over the plains, tell me if you fall, fall, fall for the sake of Adam & revenge, all this is a lie, ask the mirror, ask the charlatan & the trickster & the lunatic behind the bars of the cage you carry under your ribs, breathe, sing and breathe, spin and turn for the nausea, ask the wind to cure the sickness of the world, hallelujah for the sake of our lives, hallelujah, continue on, leave the darkness behind, look, look at the rain of rains, it is time to remember the memories letting the banner for the disappeared to wrap itself around your skin, your hands are clean, let go of the whispers, the moans & groans, the dogs bark for some redemption, go join them with your feet carrying the cross for salvation, see the mountaintop, the mountaintop will never smell your want, color the sidewalks with demands, for the release of truth to release us from the bondage of doubts, can you not see the silence of the silent, can you not see the gags to withhold the electric shocks to teach you obedience, release, release yourself in this fight, this absent war, this love, this sin, this tear, this flesh, for liberation, for liberation to dive through the glass windows erected by the bastards who speak in our tongue, spin out the stories as if the cotton was being born from your womb, from the center of your gut I see you collapsing into a whorl, into arms to lift me up to smile at the faces of myself, of my other enemies, slap me and you will tear the fabric of your comfort, of the suburbia poisoning you, poison flowing into the river, you & I will have to drink the poison for reason we will never know, we, we, can you explain how the honey of words drips down our lips, dripping down to die & be born again in a puddle of warm certainty, rest, rest so that the wanderer floats by without you saying goodbye slashing a tragedy or a comedy in blue ink, in blue ink

that never ends, you will never end, hiccuping your search for a search leading to a road knowing the eternal cycle, the trap, the trap, the release for your life under a tree sipping old tea, the tricks of meditation, the guiles of your own circumlocution, perhaps you are bereft beyond resolution welcoming a suicide, an excused suicide, can you hear me? can I hear you, you & I are disjointed, on our sliced knees bowed down in echoes of how much more, how much more, and we might punch through suffocation, twist ourselves out of a chocking, someone will light our way for a price and denude us all, there will be a need for you and me, to mix our ashes to rise in flames we will never see, final acts of martyrdom standing on the edge of a windy precipice screaming, screaming over voices to the great void, we are here, we are here, the violins tearing itself into chords sticking to our hair, this is a marriage till the clouds fall of the end of the world, slipping, slipping further down a slide such are the thorns of love and hate and no balm will heal the bruises or remove the hurricanes from our eyes; so ask me about faith

I say there will be sorrow
so ask me about faith
I plead there are poets who want to be rescued
so ask me about faith
I struggle I can't tell you
so ask me again, again and again
I whisper wrap your arms around the dead
so cry to me faith, faith and faith
and I voice to all forgive the living
you are free and chained to the world.

Rush

for Bill Varner

I can see Brahms beckoning,
handing me the violin and saying,
go ahead, you know how to play.
It is dark, just about evening
outside the window, all the oceans
jumping over stone walls to catch
a sensation of smooth flesh
of a woman running to a house
with one light on and a man
with a flaming orange sun tattooed
on his left arm shouting to the
sky through a hole in the roof,
where is the sliver from the words
chiseled onto the school blackboards.
In the air, the heat from the
glowing "release yourself" neon sign
burns a dove with chains on your
scalp and you start to think
if you will ever die peacefully, having
had great sex the night before and
spent everything you ever earned
on ice-cream for the children
in every ghetto and shanty town
in this world the night before that,
in the dive to part the earth
into good and good, swallowing

the evil, the devils, the hells using
your tongue of fantasy, pushing
huge monsters with scepters on
glorious horses back into the
folds of your towel which is wet
from the leaking tear duct on
the side of your pen, saturated
so that a puddle is near the
wash basin where your child
will splash insanity, pain and
forgiveness all over your legs
while you are shaving and
all the gremlins in your head who are
poets through a 30 day guaranteed
mail order "Become a Poet and
Give Revelation" catalog are
whispering to your ear,
howl loud and hard before collapsing
into the arms of your blue mother and
red father, and sink under the licks
of the first woman you ever made love to

on a night when you saw Brahms and
yourself (with a harmonica) at the edge
of the horizon, far away from
your grave on the dry bickering grass plains of

Pennsylvania.

History

There is a nameless history in all of us.
It climbs up our vertebrae and
snips off our nerves one by one till
we are old with hate and ash
under flames born of loud petitions for suicide.
So I ask for a call of need from you
so tell me my history is a bubble
of dreams, that it is a temple
where we all crawl to, tell me
where somebody stamped my
history on my veins, tattooed there
till eternity eats my bones.

If I call for help can you believe me
when I say to you that I want a
divorce from my history. Let it
breathe on its own and see how
hard it is to grow senile and suspicious
all alone. Separation breeds fear and
fear pisses forgiveness; no generation
bows down to history and I belong
to no generation. Tell me, am I slave to history?
I am lost in this traffic in the middle of
Saddar and Empress Market, the cops have left us
for accidental death and all the drivers are
waiting for an excuse to jump into
the fray. History is no longer hanging
from the sky all red but green -
go Kerem, go, you are a slave,
but a free one. I can't see my hands
in front of my face, there is the darkness
of the evil I call hate and I am tired
of driving for so many hours.

With all the tumult of the years
I am in silence, history sitting beside
on the torn, cheap brown leather seat,
eyes down, nose twitching in
nervousness. So who shall break first?
Such is the cruelty of the universe
where the choice is either to kiss
your enemy or to kiss your soul, both
ending in death and desire. I would
like to teach it to cry so that when
I demand a second chance it can cry
with me in its helplessness. We wait
till Dante comes and tell is that
hell has frozen over and the Devil
looks cute with a wool sweater.
Kerem and history laugh, once again they
are children who don't know where
their parents will leave them forever.
We are still laughing. Our hands are
sleeping in each others flesh and
we know we can never talk to each other;

we don't have a common language.
But neither talking nor language
did both of us any good. I kiss her
and for now that is all what matters in order to live.

There is a nameless history in all of us.
We are in search of a light which
will show us the stillness of our loves
and the restlessness of wanton singing.
If there is a way for us to trod on
then it is nowhere in the screaming wails
of history or the torn fingers
of my hands slashed by the blades
of tomorrow. Black & white
trickle down our necks, grunts
collect cups painted ultraviolet,
were are the strings of woven
whispers and soft voices that
bind us. All alone in blindness,
forsaken by streets on which we
licked off pieces of desperation and
hope, there is a call in the closed
room somewhere stuck under the
miasma of our hearts, to catch fire and choke on the time
that is yet ours to own.

Is it belief or faith,
to see that one day time will run out

but we will no longer be scared
to jump into the transparent water

of trust, forget, & crumbling peace,
slipping into each other, each other,

for today and tomorrow I yell this:
tell me my history and I will tell you yours.

Veil

Water is covering me up under her belly
and we both know there is no point in
struggling. I let go of my oar, unlocked the
buckles of my lifejacket, slipped under
the waves that tell stories of heroes and
mermaids in a cacophony of voices and
choruses. I killed yesterday, did not
wash the smear of lies from my arms,
dreaming there is nothing such as confession
or morality. It is a slow descent into hell,
this state of mind where the flesh
of the woman you love fails to
redeem you or the guarantee of
another tomorrow can not feed your
hunger of a thousand quiet suicides.
The thought of trying to work no longer
distracts you, our hearts are pumping
blood without caring about the whys,
if we fall we are not worried about
getting caught. Our souls are
cocooned in veils. Black veils
without lace or hint of silk in the
fabric. Heat, hot warm humid
air weighed by carbon dioxide crawls
up your chest. You heave once, maybe
twice. You see the words you might
have spoken, the life you might have had.
Then the water rises, takes you and you are no more.

Lamb

Sacrifice me. Melt my lamb skin on your
flames and don't ask me to say
any last goodbyes. I am sick of it
all this is the only solution.

Revelations are outdated, romantics
have been slaughtered, artists
have licked away their fingerprints,
days whirling into a loss of love,
distended bellies satiated on
resignation, masters of war
fucking and fucking and fucking
over the wheezes of our souls,
the protection has collapsed,
the music of escape and illusion
torn into chords of red and
blue, it is a dive into a pool
only one foot deep, where will
it all end, will our consciences
be saved, who will be left to
fight the eternal sleep, tell me,
tell me, tell me, darknesses
and evils are barking at out
heels, shit, everything is going
to shit. Sacrifice me, there is
no other way. Sacrifice me.

Hoofs

Hoofs are behind me, rushing
over the warm earth that
bore my fathers blood in shame.
Manes are flying as if hands
were being cut off and spread over
the graves of the runners of heaven,
in place of prayers on my back,
there is a trail of dirts, dividing
my life into two, with a knife
which plows furrows of death
and laughters across the love
which you & I thought we had.
In the disappointment of
finding a loss of purpose in our
dreams, you & I will have to
walk, plod, crawl through the mud
born from the hard rain
of last night and get to the
horses when they are sleeping
and steal their hoofs. And
then we will gallop over each other.

Photocopy man

I still don't know his name. So long this man has copied the needs of my academic endeavors and I still don't know his name. He once said he has no interest in migrating to America because one heart and soul belong to a land which is his. When I was fourteen he had a photocopy machine at the side of Kehkeshan Shopping Plaza, and with a smile which reminded me of an angel who refused to believe in the immortality of the devil, he made copies. Kehkeshan Shopping Plaza is gone but he is still here, in a small shop but now with two assistants. Eight years of copying and the man shook my hand when I was home last time, reminiscing about the previous years. I ordered three copies of my play from him. A matter of habit, a matter of grabbing onto of what has gone by. The copies were spotty but I didn't care which is the way it should be.

Dune

In the darkness behind the closed eyelids, I can see dunes which undulated into the palms of women who have forsaken their breasts, shut away the dirt that is now caked on their thighs, who have killed their wombs. Wind in softly blowing the desert snake promises of a cooler day and voices of men who are whispering victories of war with their boots ankle deep in the sand which is not hiding the bones of prophets who failed their followers. I can smell the flowers at the feet of the dunes planted by lovers who do not know what rape means, or the stench of animals who sniff around carcasses snickering at the vultures above. Beyond the vultures are stars wheezing a faint light and I can see speckled shadows slip and slide on the dunes. Towards the coming of dawn I try to find tracks but there are none. And in my yearn for revenge I shed no rain for the dunes.

Ghost

You sit at the front end of the bus, the one that drops you off at exactly the same stop at 8:40 in the morning. I know you are retarded, that the river in your veins has melted to ore. I also know you will not realize that when you kill a fly, there is nothing in your soul which makes you think about the collection of wings you have in a jar in your pocket. You have forgiven us for our sins and I look at you not knowing what to do. If I knew your name I would have asked you a couple of questions and said I will not allow you to fade into the stones of our cities. You are the purest of us all, one who has taken the ore, held it with his naked hands and cooled it into a kiss of peace and loneliness. There is a song inside you, give it to me. I am hungry for your ore. I want to know your name.

Othello

The next morning in school choir
I was sleepy; I had tried
to be Othello but could not because it was getting late.
Darkness in the stairs, the salty sea,
shadows slowly slipping into the
heat, voice of Orson Welles,
the next morning was not welcome.
Black and white movie covering
my face, I wanted to kiss
Desdemona. Fell asleep,
and was in choir the
next morning. Desdemona
can I kiss you after school?

Again it is next morning and
I don't get up. Desdemona is
dead and my kiss is drying on
my lips. Othello, my dear friend,
such cruelty does not do us
justice. I hear your voice and
remember that it rings of Orson
Welles. I don't understand you,
I don't understand me. Iago
I understand, but I can never remember him.

Twenty three now, I waited
twelve years for the end
of Othello. So long for the
quietness in Cyprus to sink
in. If this is an attempt at
bridging years I have failed,
I miss the next morning in the choir
and the old t.v. where I saw
a man, Othello. And look
at me now - Othello has
finished his travels, the old t.v.
withered away, my flesh
is not black and white and
Desdemona did not die in my arms.

whisper me a moan

whisper me a moan
and I will give you your name,
slide over me, pick up the
layer of dirt of fears, the flakes
of lies, set me free, tell me
there is a heaven beyond the
doors of hell, that the night
will end tomorrow, our stories
promised to become tales for the
ages, come on whisper me a
moan, there is a want of wind,
a desire for quiet days rain,
fall on the bed which belongs
to all our past lovers and
don't ask me if I will cry when you
leave, grant me a wish and
let me kiss your breast which
holds the fire stolen from the
world, if we are thieves then
say so I am I still waiting doe destiny
to come and knife me, sweet
suicide where the line is thin,
sight blurred and sacrifice done
for free, there are whispers, there
are moans, give me both and
I will give you your name.

This train

I want to run after this train
which never stops
just like in the good days
under the Clifton Bridge
on the way to Usama's
house, where the
smoke clogged my lungs,
the air smelt of forgotten
streets and the slums
rested on blind regrets. There
was innocence then,
the train struggling to
keep a schedule and I
was going to Usama's to
forget all my schedules,
to look at the magazines.

I saw my father smile in
a dream I had yesterday. And
in the dream there was the
train once again. I am running
after father and train,
not willing to stop, not yet
ready to cry.

Yelda

I wanted to dance with her.
Yelda, Yelda, Yelda, my head
was screaming to my heart
and my mouth was silent

preoccupied watching her eyes
dreaming of touching her hands
visions of love and commitment
creating skies where all doors would open

walking in quiet restlessness
I wonder what my mother saw
her son smiling over sunsets and sunrises
twelve years old and contentment on his face

the music was in my blood
future conversation penned down for practice
where is the room for sadness
for her departure without goodbyes

I am now thinking how she is doing
if my name is screaming inside her head
whether the smell of childhood is at her nostrils
because I will die and I want her to remember me

My Hawkesbay

The man drowned in front of me.
My father rushes into the waves
and my mother prayed to God but
he slipped through my fathers hands and
my mothers prayers, the man I mean.
He waved to me in death, and today
I am cursing for not waving back.

It is the waves at Hawkesbay beach.
Waves which carry so much salt that
brick huts crumble into sand, washing
back to the bottom of the sea together
with remembrances of souls lost
and won. When I was sixteen my
father told us that he had sold our hut,
that the sea was dangerous and besides,
all out our friends we went with
had left Karachi.

But before the hut was sold it imploded.
The last time I went to Hawkesbay I said
goodbye to the sand with crab bones and
sunsets with camel imprints. I sill have
the photographs taken with an
eye for the future - grainy and underexposed.
Photographs which my father took
are better. Black & white
without a mystery. Smile on
his face and mothers head scarf
is blowing in the ocean breeze;
days when the water was blue to me
and nothing more. Does the sand remember
all the miles I ran as a fallen angel
or the thoughts I put down for
the tides to erase as a failed devil?
All the drowning, in
front of me and inside,
the people drifting by and I am trying to catch them now.
All I have to show for it is a rotting
sea shell collection and a
tattoo in my arm of flames and water.

I need to go back to Hawkesbay,
find the hut, ask my father
a couple of questions, kiss my mother, and
show my sister where I ran
and became child of the sea.

Heroes for a day

Wet prayers kissing my hair
making it belong to a noir guy
in a classic black & white movie,
I am thinking of her
of how she is waiting to hold
to hold onto herself
but those wet prayers make
skin slippery;
Coltrane does not care and
his sax drips the colors of
lost loves which hide
under chairs at
bare rooms belonging to
good poets, bad heroes,
those who kiss only with
their lips, drive with a
cigarette and foot on the gas,
and have jokes rejected by
forlorn comic in hell
such melodrama waters my
blood, so what? I'm still
thinking of her and how I
can kiss her better than
a whole lot of heroes put
together. somewhere in the
coolness and wetness of the hero lies
a prayer (perhaps for Coltrane)
that we just have to continue on
till our feet are awash
with the wet green grass growing
from the bellies of those
we forgot to remember at the
end of the day
the end of the day when
rain and prayers rest to breathe,
Coltrane sits on his chair
wondering where love is lost,
and I am searching for
the hero who will carry tomorrow

tomorrow tomorrow tomorrow
echoes who desire forgiveness
and to be held by the shoulders
I did both
she asked me to
we are all heroes for a day.

Gaziantep and Edremit

In Gaziantep there are not
many mountains, my mother
never mentioned
this absence but it shows
on her face
now, my father, once
told me there was a good
size mountain in Edremit
named Durdag on the
slopes of which were partridges
people shot for fun,
little stones with strands
of torn feathers I saw under
his nails. In the middle
of dry stone land is this
Gaziantep looking at the
sky searching for an ocean
to bend over. Far away
there is this Edremit, mountain
and ocean together asking
passerby where is a bluer sky
to own. Some say folk tales
never end, they are just forgotten.
I have not forgotten this one and
it hasn't ended:
a dervish with a loud voice
and black eyes gave
light to Gaziantep and Edremit
to see each other in the twilight,
in return they passed on
their souls and words when
they gave up looking at the
sky, gave up standing as mountains
at the edge of restless water;
today this dervish
is lost from sight but
you will recognize him
because he is the man in the roadside cafe
eating a lots of nuts and black olive and drinking cranberry juice.

The mountain

Luiz, my friend with the
bad back, always talked
about climbing the mountain.
Martin Luther King saw one
and died in return.
I will be leaving in the morning
and I am not sure what I
will be climbing.
All I can say is that the
view will be great,
the breeze will feel good on
my cheeks, the smooth
rock will give rest to my
frame and if I remember
I will utter one or two private
prayers. Then, in a fit of craziness
I will run
down hollering revelations
only understood by me and
other lunatics.
like Luiz and King.
It is one of those things friends,
either you live it or you don't.

State of grace

Nagasaki blew up into an eye,
Auschwitz melted into the
chamber of forgetfulness,
Bosnia splintered as bone
fragments all over the television,
Vietnam blazed and disappeared
among the blood green of forests,
mothers wandered among the
footsteps of their sons and daughters
in Buenos Aires, mud covered
souls with names in El Salvador,
bullets pierced crossed in Belfast,
children had prayers frozen
on their lips in Guatemala,
car tires melted on
necks beside the asphalt of
Johannesburg, red hands crawled
onto barbed wires in Soweto,
shopkeepers moaned for a revenging
God in Karachi and Bombay,
meditations evaporated into drops
of clear rain in Tibet, walls
wept sweat, madness and loudness
in Diyarbakir, in Los Angeles,
in London, in Cairo, in the
dreams of yesterday and tomorrow

I say no more
no more my people
to this state of grace.

Hold that

You want to hold onto the
last drop of water
to the last word which
will remind you that
your father will reappear
in empty doorways
and you will want to see
your mothers dancing eyes
in those of your wife's
it is that sliver of the
sky stuck at the tip of
your finger asking you
where did we all lose
belief, when did we
refuse to go to sleep alone
and the answer is not
echoing in your head
you are not at the verge
of sliding on orange
skins to smell different
from yesterday, from the
tomorrow you see rushing
towards your lower back
from the corner of your glass
eye, where unknown to you
your grandchildren are
wondering who cried so long ago

Distances

Distances are being left behind,
the tea sitting still reflecting
a last shimmer of my face
before I leave; and I can't
drink it. There is a bend in my
stance, it is not the weight of the world
but the breeze whooshing and slamming
into me as I grasp a door handle
and realize I am a day older.
Outside, so many have forgotten me
while I simply can't let go,
spreading ink over paper woven
out of restless mumblings in
a corner of my tongue where
streets skip rope, houses clap
when electricity is rationed, poles
whisper, rebellious water is sold to
the rich as water, and with the
ink memories slapped with worries
soldered into chains with quietness
and sadness spread over my legs.

Distances are being left behind
by me in this dark; the shops
have shut down, infants have
graduated, friends married to
those you once wanted to kiss,
distances from strains of
forever, eternity, always,
those chimes melting to a
drizzle lightly as I ride on
my bike, pedaling towards
a prayer I know, a redemption and
forgiveness I will never see,
the wheels under me cutting the dark
into packets of love and loss, my mouth
wishing for fire and flame,
to be licked slowly as I grunt into a
headwind and say, the darkness,
love and I will end
at the end of the sleepless ride.

Darkness is being left behind,
hiding and giggling around trees,
whose leaves crunch under your weight,
the weight of separation and disjointment
piling on top of my belly as the years
and stories without an
audience continue on.

Yeah, Mrs. Lobo

We are in a circle, on a stage and
Mrs. Lobo is trying to teach us how to sing
and dance at the same time. Boys and girls
are holding hands, wondering if this
really was a good way to get out of class.
We are all nervous. Old enough to realize
we will never hold hands like this ever again,
young enough to dream of loving
as simply squeezing a grasped hand,
we are caught in a cycle of music,
dance, wanton risk taking. On my left is
Tushna Dubash, on my right Nargis Chinoy
and I am squeezing both their hands. They complain,
I plead innocence, and pirouet for them
as a gesture of approaching manhood, lost
knowledge of women, flirtation and time.
I knew then, there was a meaning in
all this, this dance on an elevated platform
where the music is good but old, voices are
melodious but off key, steps are
strong but out of step, there is, I know,
meaning in Tushna asking me to shutup,
Nargis shyly berating me, you idiot, you fool,
and I am laughing, laughing for
this place and time which belongs
to us. I have no amnesia. I remember
the newness of their flesh, the lines
on their palms still undredged.
I remember everything. It is
late morning, the dew is lost,
our whole lives ahead of us,
there is no death, and in my left
I am holding Tushna,
in my right I am grasping Nargis.
And we are slaves to Mrs. Lobo's
music and dance instructions.

Chant

There is a tangle in our minds,
for the soul who departed without
a question or two,
angels in skies under our feet
we tell you, the search is full of noises.

Some angels tells us the morning will not be
a surprise, that love will crash
and burn on the windshields of our
cars, but we tell you, we will go on.

Sometimes, burnt out ghettos and
descending darkness slaps anger on
our faces, revelations dry up from our
reservoirs, so we tell you, we are suckling on poverty and hunger.

From the darkness we slit open a womb
of light, and scrap magic and chants
from city walls, calling spirits and lazy
gods to heed our call, we tell you, loudness is not a curse.

Perhaps we are living our lives over and over again,
without knowing it, the cities and
everything and everybody in it collapsing into
the residue of the hate and grace left
for each death and birth, our childhood
and senility photographed and then faded
for purposes of forgetfulness, nostalgia and conversation.

Stormtrooper

I wonder what is going to come next.
Standing at the edge of the storm
behind the dunes, I wonder if
death will come easy, if I will
have to look at Mary and have
to say, sorry for leaving before you.
There is soft sand within the
storm, who will go in and bring
back the grain on which is
written "Allah", it is I
who says yes. Must be Mary's voice
beckoning, ramming into wandering
ghosts which makes it harder
then it should be. I had asked
for guidance last night; this
morning I remembered that
Gabriel for his last wish asked
for my birth and the heavens
sighed dreams in relief. To
palm that grain is my fate
and too love Mary is too.
I want to smile at this unfair
war. I tell to Gabriel's ear, we will
all be reborn on demand. And Mary,
rest easy, your love will bring me back.

Pathfinder

Ahead there is a path for me.
No forks, no turns; this one is
mine. There is a smell of rusted
car frames on the trees, the roots
of which are wrapped by old
newspapers declaring more people
are going to die tomorrow. Gravel and
sand are compacted at
some parts of the path, and at
time there is cracked asphalt
with pools of shit and soap
water. Heat, sweat, swarming
words, western fashions, music from
car speakers mouth their
seductions at me. At the roof
of the sky is a cinematic footage
of me saying goodbye to my father,
my friend Luiz, my people. I can't
see what is at the end, but
I hear a distant ruckus, a
tumult of lives, he clang
of power and powerlessness, and
a soft slurping lick of contentment,
this path is mine.

Pathfinder on the border of New Mexico

Ahead there is a path for you.
Crazy rocking wind, a burning sun
at every angle, hard ground where
your bare feet will give way to
knees, and on the left is a river
which has an ancient Indian
name, which means road to nowhere.
Everyday, you are on this path, craving
for t.v. and fantasy will slow you down,
silent red water will
blotch your shirt, the partner of your
life will ask to you to let go, plans
for reincarnation will go awry for
the lack of an urn, and all the
questions you ask will have a
clear answer. You will forget
that time in New Mexico is a
lizard with its tail independent from
its head; so you will grow
old but your memories will
leap and belong to others,
and keep coming back. There will be
no chance for goodbyes
or a real banging-good life,
just regrets and more
thoughts on what all this really means.
This path is yours.

Whirlwind

for Irem Durdag

I know you will never forgive your father,
so don't butcher me with your vengeance.
Over the edge of our apartment's balcony, beyond
the high tension cables, you will see those
mornings when you & I knew we were
angels on a mission, that we became
life's rebels and romantics not for love
but for screaming love. Between those heavy
eyebrows waves of the Indus kiss the visions
which you inherited from the nameless,
invisible plains of Anatolia, and in
your hands and feet, squeezed in the
crevasse of every bone and muscle, you
bathe in the meaning of your name.

And you will end one day when your
anger has melted into our sins. You
wander through bullets made of gold,
on highways with traffic so dense,
even prophets refuse to part the flow.
Yesterday, when the frustrations of
living exploded in those veins carrying
jasmine and fire, your tears drilled
a hole in the floor and blossomed
into a garden with forbidden fruits
at the center of the earth. Today,
you are telling me you did not cry,
that the hole is from your stomping
on the idiots who refuse to free the
people from the cages, those people who
knife you in the back simply
because you will not lie.

Tomorrow you & I will both have
to lie because we have fallen.
Across the broken walls in our apartment
compound you will never laugh when our
footprints disappear as they reach
the ocean. Some say they have seen us
walk on the water, dancing to
some music only known to us
and other closet lunatics.

Did you see the whirlwind outside
your window which does not have a
mosquito screen? Remember,
we will not even have graves
to rest in. Don't worry, your
hates and doubts will roll up
as strands onto the whirlwind and
then Irem, paradise and hell
will detonate in your soul.

Eve come back to me

There is a hollering resonating from the souls of people this morning. On the darkening twilight of blue, spray painted on the face of Eve, tonight, the hollering will swim to the back of my mouth, and cleanse the vocal cords. One whole day, the hollering will float on the wind born from the dance of the ghost warriors on a hilltop on the nation of Sioux, where the fire can be held in the hand, visions from medicine men can be taken without prescription. and where even I can run on the old grass at Wounded Knee with Thunderheart and Red Fish. I will have to wonder if Eve is there somewhere too, hiding behind the shadows of the buffaloes, or under wings of hawk, or blanketed and camouflaged by the eyelids that belong to the moon. Maybe she is not hiding and is carried as notes of sadness, betrayal and discontent on the hollerings, which now at midnight are silent. My veins are awash with dreams laced with chants, and the memory of Eve dissolves my blood and nerves like acid. I belong to Eve. My name is not Adam and it has been so long since I shed tears from helplessness and wisdom.

My harmonica

I palm my harmonic
and blow life into it
I am a god is dispute
and my harmonica is
clay who will be human
and music, a hybrid
of two races
fated to drink the
water of sadness and
glory of each others
births and deaths
I blow want, desire
and salvation
redemption without receipt
for eternity or remembrances
of me, which ever is last;
sons and daughters who
will see clay is left over
pieces of a supernova
in the expense of our
minds and limitations of our
hearts, the disappearances
of noises from the hoofs
of horses who rode not bothering
me anymore because I will
recreate all, ask the harmonica
and you will know why and when

We are prophets

My dear woman, we are prophets
of life, unacknowledged and
unappreciated, carriers of the
holy word, the forgotten prayer,
the neglected hold of the hand.
We bleed the regrets for the years lost,
cut ourselves in request for perpetual
silence from the hum drum of the
pursuit of excellence, service and
client satisfaction in the workplace.
We sing songs, utter unintelligible grunts
and speak for the empowerment of the deaf,
making movies about what is true and
real for the blind is our paen, and
release from shackles of our past
mothers and fathers our job. We drink the
saltwater from the ocean because
we can and can soothe the
wounds of the soldiers on the roads
with dirt because we want to.
Lost on forbidden journeys, we have
been tortured by smiling demons for
trying to cross the boundary between the
divine and the not-divine. We are naked
for our clothes mask us and we eat
stardust for our only meal. O yes, my dear
woman, no doubt we are prophets of life.

Imagine, I say to myself

Imagine, I say to myself, what would it be like to marry this woman who is lying on my legs, asking the elves in her mind to forget her past love. I had her open forehead last minute, then looked at the right canopy above my head, trying to follow two wisps of clouds drag and slide like a desert snake across the dunes of stars, one of which I thought was an airliner carrying a bunch of lovers like myself. I want to tell her I will not see her for a while simply because I have to go to heaven to sort some things out, but I say to myself, imagine, what if she looks right through you like Superwoman and finds a heart missing in your chest. In front of me is this lighthouse blinking, thinking it is a tired dragon, weary of battling knights, princes and the damn ocean. Imagine, I say to myself, when you marry her what just blazed through your spine, that you will both die at the same time and have your ashes float on open water.

Blade Runner

Spiral down the stairs without a bend
fall on marbles of sweet sugar
crunch on the chocolate night
envelope two souls till morning
it is 11:47 on the red digital readout
tell me what are the secrets you
have given up forever
what is the price of this loss
that you will never tell your children,
I am you and you are no longer
mine, strands of your hair
sprawled with your legs over my
nipples, my belly button lying
in a pool of moans, flights
of blades running down my neck,
if there is a tomorrow I don't care,
there is a light in front of me,
tell me are we forever
can we stand at the gate to love
blast the music of my life into my ears
allow me to drop misgivings into your eyes,
yeah, we are the judges of the world,
acrobats without a safety net,
baby, we are dangerous
but needed
just like our orgasms

Hurl

It is your laugh today which makes your mind stretch from one wall to another, and in between is a ravine of old, proud trees hiding a river who water is so fresh, you are guaranteed resurrection. You are climbing a mountain, stepping on this damping earth, from which rises the fragrance of your teenage years where you were close to immortal and you hurled meaning as gifts for the rest of the senile world. The boots on your feet are trying to nudge for security on those rocks that have evolved into slippery mirrors, the moss reminding you of the touch of your mother, the voice of your father when he was a child at the same time as you were. Air at the summit is clear and thin, so clear and thin, your lungs inhale every empty gasp of dream you brought up here in your backpack, and it feels okay. Sounds of the hours at the dining table, sweating from your ass, listening to an old repeated lecture on goodness, life, politics and women is now thrown against the rocks, you see below the smallness of the house you talked to yourself and yet you want to tire more. The prospect of going back down fills your gut with apprehension but you have already decided to hurl yourself into the ravine where you the trees will catch you, the river will wash, feed and clothe you and once again, you will ask the location of the path to the top.

Bounce

Distances scare me.
They numb the thoughts
in the frontal lobe of my head.
Every time I think of distances
I want to say masta espacio,
repitar por favor, the heat
of the day settles into the
protected fences of my silent
pleas, and the food I have
cooked tastes hotter than usual.
It is the fear of forgetting the
phone number of people, or not
having the time to remember the
cause we believed in, which
makes me hate distances. Someone
should blow out another world
and put all the separations in its atmosphere
to breed itself over and over again
far from us. That is the only way
out. Electronic telecommunications, information
exchange. bullshit! they don't bring the
world any closer. Yesterday, Bob was
rejected from grad school, is still working a
half ass job at the city welfare office,
and I am far away from him.
That is why distances scare me.
Closer to a subtle death and I wouldn't know about
it till it was too late.

Push

It is as simple as this:
I am nearly twenty-four
and there has been no revelation for me.
Twenty-four years worth of nights
have gone by and not one errant
angel has crashed through the ceiling
of my room and told me, it is time.
There have been no lost prophets
dressed in white on the streets
or highways who would urge me to take
over their burden. No messages
on the water, no whispers when I
am thirsty for sex, no calls for saints as I sing
and wail, absolutely nothing from
the offices above. There must be a
grievance procedure. Perhaps a way
to get hold of a revelation order
catalog for young, blatantly loud
idealists. It is a drive towards
a legitimacy for all the visions under
my tongue, for all those dreams
sweating from my thighs. I want
revelation to be a mater of choice,
not antiquated legislation which requires
me to part seas, die for all the idiots, and
be more pious than necessary. Revelations
don't change but the world is always the
same. So are twenty-four year old poets
like me. Let us have the revelation
and get on with the rest of our lives.

Miracle

There is a demand for miracles these days. Not like the olden days where they hovered at the edge of our nostrils to pick and choose the fragrance of each. Some say, miracles happen everyday which is similar to saying death is the extension of life: tough to swallow and an exercise in calculated fear. Perhaps they should be placed on the shelves of supermarkets where as the disenchanted, the yuppie, the tired and spent housewife, the hungry and soulless artist, can buy one. At the checkout line, the people will day dream the fulfillment of their wishes the moment they are on t.v. explaining the quickest way to acquire and sell miracles at a profit while at home gold will flow on streets, carnivals will take on as much new recruits as they can, and sex will be wet on many lips. Days bribing themselves to watch the night will become the norm, and murderers reciting prayers the rule. All this will be a miracle. The first one without the knowledge of God.

Slipstream

On your way without the
coffin handles to hand onto
cliff and water spray brushing
against the skin that has
no soul to hold in, all the
warnings for the trail of the
devil goading you to enjoy
the thrill lost over the
crashing cymbals dropping with
the rain as if people were
hurling stones at your white face,
the black of your eyes trying
to suck in the dreams tucked
under your pillow, graffiti proclaiming
"Sarajevo and AIDS are the cling-clang
of spirits fighting above" pass, whiz
by, blow through your outstretched hands,
the raft you set out torn
to shreds on the rocks, your life
jacket the only meager separation
between perfection and ordinary accomplishment,
the cars in the jammed traffic so
far away they don't even want to remember you,
the dropping waterfall is right ahead
and the first line of the song for the
fools of Zen goes inside your head,
this is all the honey of injustice.

Tribe

I belong to a tribe of mystics
who dance in a circle whenever
it is good to do so. We hold no communal
meetings and neither do we chant. The
cooking is done on a rotational basis and
it is only at dinner when the tribe
is gathered together. Astrology we
don't understand, science bores us,
art scares us and we don't talk
because it is not necessary for us.
We are all born knowing the future
and remembering the past, so we
dance when we realize we have
no wisdom, no utterances, but vision
and knowledge of the ends and beginnings.
We can never sleep because the question
of love your enemies bothers us and
in the mornings it is our habit to laugh
for the tragedies of the world. At dusk
we cry because we know the tragedies yet live.
Clothing is unnatural to us just as is
worrying about the meaning of life.
Our only religion is believing we are
heaven and hell, and our only practical
skill is the ability to become fire and
water, when we desire. Living under
the shade and grace of the banana tree
leaves is our status quo and our passion
is to dissolve into rainwater to escape from our
hunters. We crave for ice-cream. Outsiders
are most welcome to observe us. But please don't
ask us about the future or the past.

Blame

There has to be someone to blame
for all the murders in the cities,
the hunger residing in the stomachs, the
dingy air floating in houses, the
wars smeltering across the concrete
highway, the blood and screams
of bones between four walls, there
has to be someone to blame.
Tea in my cup has become cold,
all the loves on pieces of paper
declared and appreciated (sometimes)
are embossed onto the realities
of art-like workaholic life, and
there are more idiots worried which
fashion they should don for social
revelry; there has to be someone
to blame. Inside the anger morphs
into green gangrene, the
hands start to seethe and boil,
and feet roar their unstillness,
but shoppers go on shopping,
the t.v. goes on mumbling overworked and overcooked secrets
and the people and things to blame
melt away from the reach of our hold.
No wonder the planet is over heating.
It is getting to hot to live.
We need to find someone to blame.
We need to blame the right ones
otherwise we will have to eat the
'b', the 'l', the 'a', the 'm', and the 'e'
and choke on it
as a legacy for the future.

Watermelon

Pink water dripping down my lips
making me hear my father tell me
sixteen years old you are still
eating the watermelon without a fork or knife
like a damn barbarian; and
my mother is looking at me with
her eyes saying, never mind him.

Seeds crunching under my teeth, I am
their executioner, supreme commander
of death, they live if they are big, slippery
and hold the whisperings of my childhood,
they die if they are small, afraid
and whimpering and bemoaning their
hard luck: the recurrence of eternal summer.

In Central Anatolia, masses sink spoons
into red flesh, primal thrust into pleasure,
soul and escape. I am there, right now.
Eating the crust, my mother admonishing
me, you are a goat, it will spoil your
digestive system, eating all the regrets,
the voices, the deaths and swallowing the water
and watermelon and life.

Ah! this is the pinnacle of a glorious watermelon eater.
To smash my face into a fruit
leftover from the table of Dionysus
and breathe in the water to become the
living fish in an ocean of pink and crimson,
a man wanting to kiss his father, mother and sister,
and all he knows, and say, everything will be alright.

Smoke

Whatever you brought from
the aisle will tumble into
the plastic bag from the
hands of a woman you will
never know. In this supermarket
the stench of unfamiliarity hangs
over your head as you start
to think whether the children
of this mother in front of you
will ever climb out of the darkness
they are swimming in. This
woman old enough to kiss you
on your forehead and give
directions to you for the life
yet to come outside the automatic
doors, is breaking inside, praying
when will my son walk proudly
by a checkout line. My shoulders
hunch, and I want to kneel
in front of my mother, quietly
saying I will find a way out.
I look at her as her hands
grace grocery items, washing the
sins and guilts of sons who
have forgotten their mothers.
Her eyes don't bend,
"Have a nice day" spills into my
soul together with the blue evening
canopy and I all I can spit out is,
"You too".

Revolution

Nurse tell me why have you stuck
an i.v. into my arm which says
"revolution" on the label? Isn't
it enough that my bones have been
shattered by batons harder than the
core of the dreams of children, isn't
is enough for you to touch the
bruises on my flesh where all
the fucking principles I believed in gushed
in torrents of weakness and blood?
Soles of my feet can't carry this
struggle anymore, knuckles in
my hands can't grip a pencil to
protest with anymore, my tongue
has receded into silence after
being electrocuted, and yet Nurse,
Florence Nightingale of this soldier,
this peasant of beliefs, you pump me
with revolution into veins collapsing
under your care. Tell
my sister, I disappeared into memories
just like the way the guru at the
edge of the wall out on the road which
goes by our apartment, said. Nurse,
ask me if I am ready to receive
messages from the millions who have
overdosed on your i.v. Ask me, if I will forget
your mistake for killing me.
Nurse, hear me I say no.
You should have given me an i.v. of peace.

Rattle and Hum

for Hasan Zaidi

Hotel room in Providence, R.I. at the edge
of America, and I am
on my bed at Exelcesior Hotel in
New York, six years ago, when you and I
knew the taste of our lives. Six years,
and on both nights the rattle of our
childhood was, is, getting quieter,
the hum inside our lungs gathering
force, ready to be breathed forth
when we check out in the
morning and admit, we are scared
but not conquered. Those tasty days
of cricket and fantasy women,
lap on shores of my bed, beckoning
some kind of wild response which
will demonstrate to our children
and the women we love, that even
rebels are human. America has
licked me all over but I still crave
for the din of our voices melting
like iron ore into a Pakistan hat
has wrapped its dust around our bodies.
Outside, there is a haunting
sense of calm, but inside Hasan,
the crashes of steel, concrete and
ink are tearing holes in the wallpaper
lining this hotel. It is not easy to munch
on the cluttering noise. My teeth hurt.
It must be America, Hasan.
It must be.

Anarchy

"Tell you what man, everything is collapsing and wilting into chaos. Fuck, there are homeless children begging for food in every city, crime no longer makes us numb, and money has imprinted its color on our skins. Look around man, people are dying, women are wailing for good reason, jobs are evaporating quicker than the money I make being a cab driver, capitalist system my ass. The rent is due, my hunger is ringing louder for every hour that trickles by, and where the fuck are all the people who are supposed to be smart enough to solve humanity's problems. We have finally conquered ourselves, inherited our own suicide, God and hope can kiss my ass, fuck man! Where is the sense in all this? Hey, you say you are a poet, well write this, O dispenser of wisdom: we are all fucked. There is no tomorrow. We have drowned in our own sea of blood and screams for the last time." So said to me this man who drove me from JFK Airport to La Guardia.

Solace

At the end of it all, you don't want the day to
hurt anymore. You want the sun to sink
into the depths of your worries over your shoulder,
and kindly nudging a new
moon to lift up from the clouds of death
as a broken piece of stainless steel forged
into a armory where your grandfather
thought of your name, guessed the
color of your companion's eyes and
knew the sword he was making would
break one day. The food in your belly
dissolves into dark dreams you have
trouble digesting because not only
do you remember them, you even
understand them. Love floats between
the spaces of your chest, and you are left
bereft of the security of faith,
color and the coming of night where
you can desert yourself, detach to an
unknown destination, return to the
nudeness of your lies and masks and
parents. You are not getting any younger
and sleep comes more easily than immortality,
and newscasters seems more irritable.
You want the rest of soul, ease of
breath, collapse of hate and judgment,
for a time and space in your
life when solace was not a word
but a painting you knew Van Gogh
gave birth to at great expense,
for you and nobody else a long time ago.

The Barefoot Countessa

I read in the newspaper today
that they sold Humphrey Bogart's
hat he wore in the movie for
\$500. It should have fetched
more. After I watched the movie
I cried in my sleep for the
woman who was beautiful and
tragic, one trapped in a movie
of love and deceit. And I could not
save her. Her white fur coat washed
away my ten year old innocence
and her tears covered me
with a film of protection from
lovelessness. I cried for all
this. I vowed to declare my
love to Nadya Ajanee the next
morning, when my heart would
admit to itself, go high on its own,
saying, "you are a romantic". The
hat should have fetched more.
The Countessa is still alive,
how do you think she still feels?
All those tears for \$500.
The world, I and Humphrey deserve more.

Typhoon

Renegade clouds approach
to the corner of my eye
leaving the blueness of what is
above me pushing on the eyelids
of the other. I want to meditate.
For the last half hour I biked
over stubborn hills to come near the
water where a young fly buzzes
louder than the people and
leaves who names I do not know
brush my face looking furtively at the
lick of the wind wetting my lips.
My breath is under my hands,
the diaphragm rolling with the wheeze
of the stones I slithered on, oozing
into each crack. I know I am not
supposed to think of anything,
I have to just be. But I am
running into a gentle, arms open wide,
a laughing sort of sleep. Nobody is
going to take the bike. I can
meditate some other time. Clouds
have run away, the fly ruminating if
the world is round, on my leg. And the
lick on my lips. The knot unravels,
and I am really not thinking of anything.
But I am definitely not meditating.
I see a typhoon over the tree before I slide away
to somewhere. It can wait. Meditating can wait.
For the next thirty five minutes I will belong to sleep.

Spin

Thirst of adventure drips with the
rose water of freedom down my
throat. This life of mulling over choices,
planning the future, as if it were a garden
with seeds coming from a t.v. offer,
is not from me. Yesterday I saw
Garcia beckoning to me in the dusk,
but I had to make dinner, time
was at a premium and so I could not
write Spanish sonatas by his knees.
There is a life to be lived by me
where each day is a joy and
each night a tragedy, where
the body will tire, the mind will
bubble and soul will ask for a
earth to rest on. Secrets of worth
are within the whispers of strangers
and stories which belong to you float
in the moans of other adventurers.
Nothing is mine except the life I live.
Mary, listen to me, we have to explode
into little pieces. It is simple and necessary.
We are in this spin together.
And don't worry, boredom is for the wise.

Mines

for Vaughn, Holliday and Fitzgerald

Darling, there is an elvish ghost
at the foot of my bed,
and he saying you have
been playing me for a lonely fool.
There must be a mistake
because you declared your love
to me last night after a kiss
and I know you can't lie
since we are a long way from home.
Whispers the color of blue
are invading my thoughts,
the urge to dance with you
is disappearing into noise outside
the window from where I have
not been able to find anything.
Days gone by are being tripped
by me as I step on them
the pain nothing compared
to the loss of love that is now
put and declared tenderly on the neon signs
across the street.
Darling, tell the elvish ghost
he is wrong. We have a world
to save in the morning. Please,
darling, say it isn't so.

Sarah

She was much taller than me and not destined to become the object of several love poems several years later. Kind, soft spoken, and if I remember correctly, carrying a disappointment of the soul. Never talked much to the boys and was far from the giggles of the girls. There was a world of hers which her father would enter into everyday as he came to pick her up from school. As a courtesy to her and her world, my mother ask me to invite her to my birthday party. She never came. We never talked much. Several months later I was invited to her birthday but due to lack of transportation neither me nor my world could go. At the end of my tour of duty in Class II K, her father told my father, where I don't know, that they were leaving to go elsewhere, where I don't know. Today, I feel myself craving for news about her, from her. Such is the torture of childhood and age. She would know. Her name Sarah Wali Mohammed and she has one of the keys to the doors inside my head.

Hurry

Don't hurry away far into the light which no longer reflects off the back of the woman who took the dip within the pools belonging to my anger. Stay my guide, stay, talk to me with promises of comfort and understanding, ask me questions whose answers I know, hold me from skidding toward words that carry no love or touch, heal me from the sickness of hurrying head long to a bright night where skeleton frames of cars kiss errant bullets. My spine is wet, my neck is soft, shake me from wanting, to be cut into a million prisms; suggest a salvation for me. Hurry, protect me from the flirting smiles of evil, and give me the amulet that will stop my fall. There is a need for you by me on the vacant shore. The day is just beginning and I am being slapped into submission by men who dig wells of blood with their claws. Don't hurry away. Hurry towards a shard of freedoms left behind by demons which we are doomed to look into and kiss, for the birth of a thousand mirrors, a thousand aches.

Drenched

Leave me alone world, leave me alone
I am making love to a meteor
ask me nothing of your aching
I am burning in ice, dust and fire
tell me not of your blood and screams
I am meditating the future
hide from me your trivial champagne gossip
I am riding a black horse oh hills of heaven
slip away your hisses of doom
I am crying for mists of the past
pocket the bombs and rapes
I am langouring under an open wombed sky
but stay
whisper to me that the day will end well
the dirt under my nails will disappear
dance with your soul around me
we need to keep the darkness at bay
read in a loud voice, prophecies by lunatics,
the aching of our lives needs to be swallowed
run over my back with your bare feet
I need to know I am mortal
paint all your suspicion and doubt as graffiti on my arms
I have to wade through rivers of hate
kiss me with your red lipstick of wisdom
there is hope in a drenching by romantics
leave me alone and stay
at your discretion.

Burden of Maya

This is not the time to die.
Pyramids and monuments are gathering
moss and dew while the ancient bricks
with smells of secret mutterings and
undoings lace the images blaming on
the sides of my pupils. A long time
ago, there were people who caught
stars with a fish net of love
and faith, asking squabbling but
respectful gods, if the maize they plant
will be the food for their
children. Eyebrows curved over
rainbows snatched from galloping
clouds, and masks hid the abyss
from souls lost in green jungles in a
land where I was born a long
time ago, a long time before death.
My brethren, father and mother,
the memory of your weight burdens
me; I walk alone as last of the
breed of swaggering tricksters
and prophets, laughing through echoes
of smoke, stench and loss. If there
is respite I want none, for floating
spirits tell me, no matter how
much death there is to eat,
this is not the time to die.

Dilemma of Mephistopheles

In a middle of a land close
to a border where I desperately wait
to cross without a valid passport
I dreamt of friends I no longer write
to. The lack of electricity here crackles
the wire inside my brain with heat
but the dream was full of rooms with
white snow. I fear for my friends,
that we will drift away together
with promises of electricity for this
place, dreaming at critical times
of our lives pictures of big rooms
with snow in it. There is no way
it can be helped; dreams and
drift of friends are hardwired into
our skins in the womb of mothers
who have all met Mephistopheles.
We are all his children. And we
are caught between snow and fire,
lawlessness and law, poetry
and truth. Mary assured me with
her nakedness in the morning such
dilemmas are the fate of people
who don't want a grave.
Mephistopheles surely must have smiled
at that. One of his sons
had succeeded in forgiving him.

Shrapnel

I am writing songs on the curve
of her back, songs in which
the hope to lead a full life is
bullet ridden with doubt. There
are whisperings in my fingers,
quiet mumblings of those days.
when I don't know the
day my father would die or that
before he died, my mother was
ready to leave him. Shrapnel
of the war in front of me has
dug into my wrist, nerves
severed, but the songs come
out, out of this blow torch
of a debate against resignation.
Shrapnel everywhere, flying
with wings outstretched
and I slip behind the valley
just over the curve of her back.
Gregorian chants are scampering
towards me from under the
cloaks of executioners, hollering
softly nerves are akin to the lizard's
tail, they will grow back, and
that songs written on the curve
of a lovers back will sink quicker
than a bloodied stone into the
consciousness of a loud, forgetting world.

Ravine

Often it comes to me before sleep the worry of what my father thought just before dying into the swirling water around him. I wonder as the old, crowded bus crashed through the railings, its wheels howling in fear, spinning wildly, if my father knew there was a death, a final one, stuck into the floor of the river in the lonely ravine in front of him. Did he scream as the people and suitcases and words and regrets and promises tumbled over and over, behind, in front, under, over him? And when he got wet, did he remember his childhood, when he first learnt to swim, did he at first glide on the cold water waves, before this blood, his moustache and beard froze? I want to know. It is my right. I am his son. At least you mother fucking, son of a bitch of a God, let me cradle his body in my arms so that some warmth may return to it. It is his right not to lie on a floor of echoes at the feet of my mother half naked with illiterate military policemen hovering over him. I hope his soul is etched into the walls of the ravine. If not, I will carve it on the foreheads of the ghosts crying there.

Sail

There is always truth in my lies.
I am broken down to the clay I have
been glazed from and all that remains
in this lie that life is an expression
of the glory of birth. I have been
broken by you, all I have said stopping
without a foot on brakes against
your sixth sense which slashes
on your heart, you are right. I
can't fight such a river of water
and color washing my ankles with
what I had said so long ago,
God show thy self. And so my
child, forget your pride, you will
never see me, and the fact that
one of your brothers parted the
Red Sea, was a fluke of nature.
My God, thou has forsaken me
and I am the last of the prophets,
can you bear my guilt? Where are
your tears which will become
clean hands gently wiping the lies
away and letting a breeze skim
over my skin. I hoisted my sail,
to dodge those waves full of lumbering
half-truths but there is only so
much I can huff and puff onto
a taut fabric stretched tight across the soft
pauses of you, my friend, not you, dear God.
Blow into my sail, you two, my life depends on it.

Slave

Slave to you, to your every whim,
leaving me decrepit in my quota of
silent dreams. This is no way
to live. Who the hell gave you
the right to dig into my back
with your plough and drag that
sharp metal all the way across
my soul so you could flick
a couple of seeds for your agricultural
enjoyment. Is it not enough I am
the buffalo to the wheel that
gets you cool water in the
morning, chained from my
nostrils, my own breathe
carrying the stench of slavery.
Release us, it is our fucking
right to be decent, to not have
to look at our shit and wonder
which wall of the house will
I build with this to sleep with my
wife who has already collapsed in
exhaustion. How long more do
I have to bend my neck in domesticated
servility by force to your role. I say,
fuck you. You own me no more.
I am eloping with the freedom
reserved for martyrs and wrapping
your chains around your wrists. Come and
search me out. Let us see if you can
catch me. Slave at birth but not at death.
Lets see now, you bastard, whose fingers presses whose
face through the glass windows of torture rooms.

Exodus

I am in an exodus towards a destination that I am not sure belongs to me or not. People who were supposed to be with me now dropped on the sides of the roads where concerned folk gave them glasses of water and a quick prayer or two for their health. In the marathon, they quit a long time ago, the sun dripping yellow sap to smooth the skin on the bottom of their feet. Such is the solace for those who every morning when they wake up and wash their face wondering if tomorrow will be one day close to the weekend. Their souls have dried, quiet and dead, remembering if all the massacres in our history were good stuff to read for the appearance of being educated. Ahead, is this destination, that might force me to give up my loves, or perhaps even worse, make me die at the time I am supposed to. Madness aside, there is a glaze of *deja vu*'s all over me; I have been on this exodus before. There has been anger and loss at the end. And there will be more again.

Gypsy

Question is where am I going
to settle down? Leaves fall
at my feet and I the sound
of scrunching corpses, as if I was
getting satisfaction from knowing
that at least there will be leaves
wherever I settle down. Hopefully
my neighbors will not be boring
and the street outside my door
does not have blood as markers
of reality. It will be some place
when I can breathe, where I
am close to the wilderness of
my wants and near an old movie
theater which shows European
movies. The house I will design, the
place in a part of the universe where
I can kiss my love at will, teach
my children at ease and learn
from those who die over and over
again every night. Ocean will be
rolling at an earshot away
and open sky pirouetting on high cliffs.
At a convenient distance will be great
food, cheaply priced ethnic restaurants, a
gathering of weird people and bars
where bands will dish it out. Where I settle
down seasons will change. Leaves will fall
and gypsies will huddle around an old fire
for the sake of being alive.

Cigarette

He pulls onto the cigarette
thinking even if this black smoke
fills him up, chocking the clear
thoughts of the woman he is going
to leave, he can still salvage the
glory that was his. Radiation from
the television has ceased because
it is after two in the morning, the
air squeezing by the torn mosquito net
on the window brushes on his
beard reluctantly, nonchalantly,
and there is no one to talk to. It is
too late to play his music, head
is swaying under the weight of
complicated plans and he badly
wants to live an adventure. Right
leg tucked under him, newspapers
by his side, a lazy glass of whiskey
poured for him by his rebellious foolhardy
son, ashes fall into the ash tray
when he remembers the house
he was born in. Above is a 60 watt
bulb wheezing light, ahead a faint
red slavish glow and below a cold
floor which needs to be swept.
Sleep is a far away comfort, damnation a
nearby drug and the hand that
presses sandpaper on his back slowly,
rubbing it over, a nuisance. Through
the fog of nicotine, he believes things once again will be o.k.

Shame

The light from the oncoming cars
makes me bow my head. The bow
makes an arc and I can
hear the swish of the samurai
blade slip under the skirts
of the air behind my neck.
There is no glory in death and
contrary to all that I dream
and whisper to you, I don't
want to die. But the light
from the cars, those bright open
eyes that don't say anything, don't
mention love kills, don't tell
you they are coming on to you
with a vengeance which is
not your fault, I am thinking,
praying might help. I have been
shamed, humiliated without
consent. I have no power to
stand on that black concrete
highway of beliefs and have the
cars through me or around me.
Inevitability of losing sets in, the
throttle inside me sputtering. And damn,
the cars just go by. And damn, I
keep on walking as people fall
to the earth which gave birth to them without shame.

Testament

My jet black hair will become white,
it won't fall off but it will turn white.
Hands will start to falter, knees
will shake and the mind will
wander to unknown crevasses.
Glory of being alive will be the fact
that I could get up every morning,
all other glories now hidden,
or lost or unwanted. My lips will be
dry for kisses, my pride ossified into
my bones, all my loves curling into
a slow whorl of sadness, my eyes
over reaching beyond the balcony
railings of my sockets to dip
into happiness, any happiness.
I am going to be planted back into
the ground, an urgent request to
retreat back to the womb; I
really don't want to go. But the
whisperings say I will be back
(as Orlando from the Virginia Wolf novel)
and for now rest is recommended.
I will miss the sex. And the
running. And the power to commit suicide. This
is an old testament to an
old injustice. Stillness is
arriving in a taxi cab and the
destination from here is unknown.
Good, that way I will not get bored.

Rage

There is a simmering volcanic rage
which bubbles in your throat.
You have seen this boy shot at
the back of the neck, frozen
in midair, in the act of running
from the bullet, and then sprawling
across those dreams which
have no windows to look out of.
Blood from his mouth, over his
arm, the eyelids closing on a
world I am forced to forget and
forgive, the muscles relaxing
for the final time and then
the last breath reaches your
ear which snaps all the anger
for the bastards who kill, into place;
you are rage, there is no turning
back and you will kill too
and think it is now
right and you know I can't
stop you, I will not stop you,
don't ask me why
because that was my boy
and I choose to be rage,
I have not forgiven and want revenge,
just this one time,
there is no sense in all this
I know, this is rage
and till tomorrow I will not give it up.

