

The Naked Matador

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, palm up, holding several bright red, crumpled petals. The hand is illuminated from the side, creating strong highlights and deep shadows against a dark, almost black background. The petals are clustered in the center of the palm, with some overlapping. The fingers are slightly curled, and the overall composition is centered and dramatic.

***Collected Poems by
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Going to the bullfight and staring at the sun

Explosions of the heart

The horizon is coming near, the birds are flying away from the whispering curses from the killers who paint the roads orange with flame and blood; and the absence of belief nauseates us all, the burning smell of our skin on a stove where dreams are cooked for the dinner table of the devil... if there is an escape then none of us know about it. And on top of it all you say that the journey to understand has just started, that the wars we fight have an end; and even more that I am going to plunge head first into an appreciative water pool of words and clasps. The glow from the base of my spine is separating the world into two and I don't care if it splits me into two, three or more. Humming at the lips of my neck, naked flesh at the precipice of my finger and I believe, oh yes I believe, my soul has no place to rest. So my friends, isn't it enough that the man who is on the street asking for a kind donation for a dose of crack, or a bowl of soup, is the reincarnation of all those souls dead before his time; this is our legacy, our punishment for the deeds of pain, death and loss of grip on the rope born from the wombs of our mothers. You say, you want a blue sky, you say you want a grass green with the stories of your children, and you say you want me and my love, but I say, I am going to die right in front of you for reasons I do not know, for reasons that will never end echoing in your ears.

I know

Horizons run closer to me, and my father is telling me as sweat rolls down in a thunder of tiredness, that he is a classical father, one who does not believe in hugging his son, but instead respecting him. Yes, he is going to give me the tools, the correct guidance to succeed in life and I am going to be grateful for him for the rest of my life, that I will tell my kids about him, that all the shit he is telling me is the wisdom from his father, and his father got it from his grandfather who fought in the Syrian war. He knows me, he knows how I breathe, how I want to succeed, how I can back-bite, and how I know how to manipulate people because I am smart and clever. He knows what is best for me, and so that is why I will not go to America and instead study in Turkey; he knows what I want. He knows America is a land of evil, slutty women and the whole place stinks of long-haired hippies, colorful transvestites and people so high on drugs that they never come down for death. Turkey will be good for me and so that is where I will go. I will be thankful to him later. The horizon is rushing towards me, and father forgive me, forgive me for saying this but you beat my mother, you beat my mother and half of what you said was wrong, was wrong, was prejudiced, was bigoted, but you meant well, that I know, and I know I am your son, that the hand you used to break my mother's nose is throbbing right under my wrist, and for that my father, my dear father, I know, you are forgiven by me, I know you are also the fountain of so much pain that it bleeds to the bottom of my feet and leaves behind a river of redemption for the sons who wash their shirts in a last desperate plunge of release, release and birth.

Burn

We all burn. Redness is behind our eyes, our brows are blackened from the soot and there are no more flesh to hang on to for comfort. Orangeness engulfs, afternoon rain washes over our wounds, we forget all the loves we promised to hold, there is hell at the bottom of our dreams and the confusion glazes from the eyes of the woman I want to make love to but not really want to, nails my hands to the wall where I sprayed the gasoline. Tell the demons to come here, to the womb where the border between son and lover melts, the freedom to kill your enemy vanishes in the night fog and we are all left wondering where are we going to go tomorrow; which door are we going to open and close and we all burn. Burning for the abandonment of hate licking our genitals, for the graves we dug because that is the only peace we know, the wars where we slit the throats of children, where we pulled out fingers from hands in order for the comfort of heavens to seep into our water so that when we drink we drink the salvation and revenge of our past generations. And we know that this will not end, the embankment upon which we lay down a blanket and look up in the sky is where we will burn ourselves, immolate ourselves into the silence of eternity since that is the only place where we all belong; oh, we all burn for the home occupied by our childhood, the plate of food given to us by our mothers, the quiet corner of our room where we huddled with our shadows and want to lie in a bed with a nakedness reserved for a woman we did not want to know but want to love. So who says we are alive? Oh, who says we are alive when the heat from the floor strips off the varnish from the table we have the painting of the world, etched into the wood with paint made from the ore, brought to the surface by miners who burned the walls of earth. There is not much to be said to a charred cadaver, to this blackened bone who fought for the good of water and rain, for the glory of good and understanding, for the clearness of the love and sex which binds us together, there is not much to be said to the one who is burning, because when you burn, you burn alone and take the whole world to hell with you.

I want

someone to take my neck and see what
makes it turn towards the sun
roaming aimlessly behind
the balcony when it is so
pitch black outside that
shadows from the flying
demons shudder in fear.
Someone has to peer inside
that neck, and if possible attach
something to it so that what goes
on in my head can be displayed on
a color monitor, otherwise I am
going to explode into a thousand
pieces from the bickerings inside
my skull which tell me it is ok
to feel lost, it is ok to have people
die around you because there is a
place for them to go, it is ok for
you to be angry because anger for
the loss of love is valid, it is ok
to smash your hands on the wall
because it is not your fault you
could not bury your father, it is ok
to put your tongue on the hot
stove since the sister you could not
watch grow up and tell her that
womanhood is difficult, was beyond
exceptions; all these bickerings inside
my head like hallucinations gone haywire.
Someone with enough expertise has
to be able to say to me, Kerem, Kerem,
we are all in this with, there are no experts
for this kind of affliction which only effects
prophets without a name, but try braying
at the moon and it might dull the pain.
I want someone to tell me that,
someone whose quietness ebbs
at the birth of the morning, one whose
heart recedes with the weaning tide of
the oceans, one who is prostrate on the
living room floor for the lack of oxygen.
I want
this madness to go away.

All I can, all I want to see is the shore

I am not going to be able to move the world.
It is heavy with the wet mud congealing in
the arteries of people, and I am fighting my
own battles. The din of the voices inside
my hands is loud but what can I do, when my
hands are not carrying the words of hope,
or of the agony. My hands are just still,
bound at the wrists by the invisible Gabriel,
who came to me last night. I said to him,
I refuse the conversation you are offering
me because I want to go and move the world
and you won't let me just because
I am human. So he gently, condescendingly
tells me, how I will crave for the attention,
how I will forget Mary and her soft whispers,
how I will drown in the dream of becoming a
legend, a man who will be so well known and
respected and revered that he will discard his
own soul for the desire to live in books, in
t.v. documentaries, in the selfishness of his
ego. Gabriel talks to much and I told him that,
to which he bound my wrists, saying the shore
is far away. He is still here, watching me and I scream
to him, I see the shore, I see the shore and
these binds will be torn apart by the
wind that bore you here to me. I scream,
and scream, young virgins from heaven
visiting me, gossiping and giggling about the
view, of how deep I have fallen where the
bottom is not for them to jump into to
help me. So much attention on me
and all I wanted was to move world
saving a couple of lives and showing
people how to live life.
Now no more, the binds on my
wrist have cut well, Gabriel
you can go now, go Gabriel go,
I know what I am,
of what I will never be,
of the silence I will hand to Mary
and ask for a hand
to go and not move the world
but shovel the wet mud from
the lungs of the shore
who breathes heavily
calling my name everyday.

Drive

I have been driving this car without a morning ablution. There is a certain joy in knowing that I am sinning, sinning without control, sinning because the car felt smooth to my touch. My cousin says he does not believe in anything anymore, and when I hear that I want to push my foot way down on the gas, shift to fourth gear and forget what my heart tells me (Kerem, you can't give up on people). The road is inviting me to die on it, to speed so fast on it that the car breaks apart at the seams and the water that was supposed to be used by me for my ablution falling on me as spray from the tires of cars which go by, go by without stopping. The stink of revenge envelopes me when I roll down the window and I have no qualms about running over the bastards who have killed my future; you, you, you. Bloody warmonger, you have ripped through my flesh with your gold-tipped bullets, you have reduced my life to paying the bills and scrambling to get to my sleep so I can seek refuge in my dreams, I am sick of coming to a house that is not my home, I am tired of wanting to help the children when everyday you encase them in ignorance, I am without an anchor. Oh, my bitter hands are unable to reverse the rotation of the earth. Oh, my feet walking on broken glass of windows blown out by your bombs are stopping in their tracks. I am no longer alive, refrains of whys suffocating me, I am going to run you over. I have nothing more to lose, nothing more to gain, nothing more to love, I am going to nail you with this car, yeah asshole, and you thought you were going to get away. It is you and me, it is starting with you and me, and to hell with those who will do the same after us.

Dream

I have fallen out of love.
Two nights ago, I ran after
her leaving Mary behind. She said
come with me and I followed. Maybe
it was the attraction of a new adventure,
or maybe it was the specks of rust on
my eyes and feet, or perhaps because
she was born in the same hot, dry, brutal
womb as I was. It was not Mary's fault that
I ran through sunlit woods trying to catch
another glimpse of her, trying to stretch my
ears for additional words. I found her twice,
in the same timber house with a high ceiling
and thick crossbeams, the sun nakedly visible
from the bay windows, only she slipped away from me
easily, saying follow me and then stepping
out of the door. Mary, is this right of me?
There is a pull on me
for me to follow her,
a desire for another kind of love,
a love that is new, virgin, one
that is not yet gotten. I know it
will not last long, she knows
that too, but we want to taste
the failure of our hearts,
the twisting of arms around
a stranger to whom we said
goodbye long ago. It is
not our fault,

this is the way it just is.
There is no reason for my fall; there
is no point in trying to explain it.
Tomorrow I will fall again Mary.
And this time,
she will watch
and walk away
without saying goodbye
or forgiving me.

Dream

The bus is taking me where Mary is.
I am going away from the noise of a
loud day, a day where I could not find her,
left bruised from the vagaries of
love and life, a day of falls. There are people talking
around me, talking for the sake of latching
onto a somebody they might know tomorrow.
On my left is an old woman who keeps muttering
to herself the reasons why her children left her,
forgotten her womb, and I can't look at her.
In front of me is a man whose back is bent
from lifting bricks and stones, his face cut into
deep lines, his head on his chest. Behind me is a
middle aged man and a woman (with strands of white hair),
both are married and want to leave it all behind, the
boring job, the lumbering meanings of days and nights,
this bus. To my right is a window, and I see reflections
in all directions (but still no her). What am I guilty of?
The road under me is whizzing by me and I know
I can't grab the concrete and make it stop. I remember
in my dream, I could stop and smell the wheeze of the
trees, the snickering of the leaves, and yet I chose
to run after her while Mary was breathing on my arm.
Somewhere in the woods, last night or today, my insides failed
to hold on to naked skin which would not allow
me to sink in deep in a loss of love,
into the demons who want me to drown.
And yet, I am coming closer to Mary.
It is anarchy of my blood and of those I belong
to; we are lost and found by accident which
scares us. No, I don't know why,
but my love is restless and
my shadows are breathless
from the running. I pull the
cord and the sign "Stop Requested"
lights up; rest could be at hand.

Sometimes, even when I know
I have found what I am looking for,
it is not enough. The bus is
slowing down, the stop is here
and this is here where I
have to love and live
blindly
eyes open
loudly
mouth shut
without her.
Today, at six thirteen p.m.,
Mary, I am home,
and ready to arise from my fall.

Hide

hide from the sorrow
don't look at the red stream on the pedestrian walk
can you hear the bullets sing
tell me, where would like to go to get away from all this
I know, I know, it a holocaust with another name

It is at night the heaviness weighs on my collarbone
and I can feel the sky above me creak and break from
the silence of my resignation. The evening news is just
over and I am in mood to go to work tomorrow, again.
At the back of my head I can hear a gun cock and squeeze
real hard on the trigger, squeeze all over again so many times
it seems

I am in one of those movies where my body is flaying and convoluting
in a sea of noise, hate and revenge;
such a deep sea. Everything slows down to slow-motion,
motion of having nothing at all, even sitting on a chair and
saying to myself I can think, I can cry through this one,
I can't it hurts. My right cheek starts to twitch, throat swells up,
music from the wails of loud Pearl Jam and sighs of hundreds of solemn choirs
mix, and mix, and I remember
the burning, hot, dingy, holocaust; spawned by this century
and left to deal with it. Doesn't your head pound? I have a need
for a shelter where flesh is part of the bone,
red is just a color of a rose,
and thirteen year olds can't kill or be killed. Fuck! if that is
such a lot to ask for then
why the hell should I give a damn.

But it doesn't work like for me.
I recognize the limp faces on the television,
I know their names, I want to do something,
for christsakes something
as the lies and noise keep on humming. Tonight all I can say is

hide from the sorrow
don't look at the red stream on the pedestrian walk
can you hear the bullets sing
hide
tell me, where would like to go to get away from all this
hide
I know, I know, it a holocaust with another name

alive

for Pearl Jam

it is the scream
that rips through your ribs and
shatters the cage inside your head
and you shout because there is nothing
else you can do and why should you
the world around you has collapsed into
a whirling tornado of confusion where
the eye is lost in a blue tear of regret and
lost innocence; and you are tired, tired of the
walking and running, tired of the loss of direction, tired
of the love you lost without question, it is the weariness
of not knowing if people will bury you with pride and
a soft hum of wails of sorrow, I know that, I know because
I am the same as you, deserving more but having to fight
for it until the blood in our fingers congeals and
makes you and me scream and scream and
say to the everybody else that we will not give up and
we will not kill ourselves in desperation, that
we are going to find the fucking meaning of what
all this is about, that the fact we are
losing our vocal chords for the glory of
desiring what is our birthright is what sustains us,
yes, yes, you and I are angry, we are angry because
we are nailed on walls of solitude, sprayed with
hate and separation, yes we are pissed because we
are being forsaken by angels and prophets and by ourselves,
we will scream, we will scream
just to show you and I and everybody else
that we are
alive
alive
and that is what matters to us most.

amazing grace

you are sitting in front of me on this bus
that is taking us somewhere we both have
to go, it is a matter of duties and responsibilities,
a matter of engagement in a life which has slapped us
left and right without remorse, you are right, I
rather be saying fuck it all, get of the bus
and walk to the nearest traffic intersection,
stop the cars and say to all, turn up the music and let us all dance
and rock till our heads explode; that won't happen
tonight will it? your earrings dangle in furtive flirting, and
I know you are thinking why is this guy
looking at me and not giving a damn whether I
look at him or not. I can see your eyes on the dark
window, the lights of houses blurring by, the picture
inside your head reminding you of how you have
grown up and yesterdays' sex with your boyfriend
was just good and not stupendous; you know you
are twenty-something but you will get old and
poets will not look at your neck and want to kiss it
and whisper in your ear, there is no reason for
what I did. Other people in the bus are breathing
wanton morbidity or snippets from television commercials,
all lost to the desire of kisses and getting off this bus
as it moves. You don't shift in your seat, a book is open
on your lap and you are not reading it, it is useless anyway
because you want to write a damn one not read one anymore;
you sit still hoping the regrets that creep and slide over your
feet will not come back, that they will not see you again, that
they will forget you but you know that will not happen,
and in that admittance lies your pain. You want to look
back, tell me that I am crazy for looking at you, you are
scared because I unsettle you, because I want to kiss your
neck once without guilt or words. You don't know me
but I know and that is what makes you want to go to your
room where the walls assure your life will be calm and
worthwhile, that you will be safe no matter what. But I
am telling you, right behind you, we should both get
off this bus, kiss each others necks and go on our
way, unsafe and unclean, with the memory of
being dissidents in a world full of slaves. I look
out and the bus is slowing down to a stop you requested.
You are stopping and I can't join you, I can't stop for you and
you are disappointed as you walk down the breadth of the bus
not looking back, the steps feel uncomfortable, you are leaving
me behind, you have lost the kiss because I will only get off
moving buses at no regular bus stops. This was a chance you
blew and I look straight ahead thinking
we all bleed in different ways.

orgy

Pete wrote to me a week or two ago
and said it was ok for me to give up.
I don't know if I have. It is something I
think about often; Pete knows.
I work for a company to earn a living,
to satisfy a variety of responsibilities,
and for 9-10 hours a day I am not involved
in changing the world. For those hours I am
not shouting for justice, for liberation of soul,
for the glory of being alive. Have I sold out?
I come from work, and I am not writing letters
to my representatives in elected government of how
I think their voting record stinks, I am not preparing
to go to Africa to distribute food to the dying, I am
not thinking of a social theory to elevate the
dignity of life and I am not meditating on grasping
a prophecy for a way to understand my and our existence.
Have I sold out? I want to rest for a year or two, fulfill
my responsibilities, try to get my the imprint of my feet
to withstand the ebb and flow of the ocean tide, I want to
be at peace, I want to read and write, try to understand what
Turkey and Pakistan and America really mean to me, I want
to be at ease for a while. Have I sold out? I don't want to
get defensive and say everyday I think about the destitution of
the people who are a part of my home and that I have escaped
that desperation. I don't want to get angry and say I am preparing
to get some experience so I can do the things I want to do. I don't
want to be jealous and say I want to be a part of a revolution not
for kicks but a way of being. I burn to ashes every time I hit
the alarm clock at 5 o'clock in the morning and see that for
today, tomorrow and the near future I have to separate myself
from the urge to be a savior. It is so hard for me.
And then, on the horizon, in the deepness of the waves of
clouds which are hands that touch me shoulders, I see
for now I have stopped my continuous howling; I have
sold out some.
And that grinds into my ribcage.
I know I have to wait, to be patient.
Just like the myths of an orgy I fantasized
when I was twelve till the time I was eighteen,
it happened but so much differently.
And so it will be the same again.
Pete, we all sell out, we
have to because the choices are so limited.
The trick is to sell the junk you carry
and today and tomorrow and in the near future
there is a yard sale outside my door.

microphone

for Eddie Vedder

I want to huddle over a microphone, my hair
falling across my face, my spine stretched between my
words, and my hands cupping the iron stand for a prayer;
I want to close my eyes and tell the people watching me I have
the answer. I will shiver, bend backwards, my feet planted to the
ground for the lack of courage and say, yesterday I woke from a dream
when the devil said Kerem you can not win over me. Some will
cheer because they will think that it was something really cool
I said and it went through them, some will be quiet as they remember
how bad their sleep was yesterday and there will be some who will say there is a need
for courage and strength. Lights, those white lights which divide my
face into two halves will scorch my cheeks, make them go red,
sweat will collect under my armpits, and I will be muttering to myself
this is one time I will not lie. I have this fear of getting the chance to
talk to devil and succumbing to his evil, a fear born from the pride
of thinking that I am a prophet of my generation, the trembling quaking
under my ankles because what if all I say and all I do is wrong,
or futile or just plain stupid in front of the mike I will
say (and I will believe in it) every morning I hope for the
blood on my hands to wash away with the blue breeze which
curls around me with a aquamarine satin sheet of comfort, every
morning. All those people watching me, waiting for me to
voice their tongues and to answer for all their doubts and fears in
a place, a concert hall, where that night I will collapse in my
own dreams, and words. There is not much else I can
do, except to bare my skies and embrace the raped, the pillaged,
the tortured, the disappeared, the unknown, the wise, the innocent,
from far away. I am one of the witnesses of my generation.

I am scared. But I have the answer to the question of,
what does all this mean. Even with what I have been saying here,
I have the answer because I saw it yesterday when it was
6:30 p.m.; I saw it scrawled on the warm earth outside my apartment.
I will bring my lips close to the metallic flesh.
And I will whisper.
Just be alive.

On the shore of Nietzsche's dreams

Today I want to leave everything behind, steal a worthy boat and sail onto the licking perils of the Atlantic. I don't know how to swim, I don't how to navigate, and I don't know how to locate shore but I still want to go. I am no longer interested in forgiveness, no longer interested in raising the dead, and no longer interested in holding onto love; I believe this is a death wish for which I do not want to die but experience. Can you blame me? The world tastes like a MacDonald's veggie burger and nobody seems to have trouble digesting it except for me. My limbs can not attach me to the earth from which I am detached and the noise of people who are withering away gets louder inside my head. I am sick of working in a rhythmic cycle that circles around me, whirling into a tornado, sucking the frightened air enveloping me, nailing me to the ground and telling me that is the way it is. That will no longer be the way for me for I will spin deeper into the water that is not owned by anyone, I will not look back but ahead into the smattering of the green and blue splitting into a thousand saltwater caresses on a skin bruised for no fault. I am not being pushed over by you or anyone, I am pushing myself over because I want to live and nothing else matters. It is the principle of passion for me; I will not be encaged, I will not suffocate and bleed for a bunch of rules. Some will say I am desperate, some will say I am selfish. They are right and I am entrapped in their cruel judgment. I am leaving not for the glory of any cause. I don't need your help and I don't need your things. I need your love to let me go and have faith in my coming back; I need you to believe in me. And what of the world which is turning red, gurgling red, churning red, coughing up red, sputtering red, being red, that is my red also my red also and I need to go so that I may come back to the red from the blue where the curls will wash me over, the ultraviolet spears will pierce yellow dye into me, the white naked breeze angels will give me orgasm, and the boat will get to the shore where I belong.

Woman

It is the smell of her skin which is
absent on the waves of dreams that
slither on my arms, dreams carrying
the sand of sadness at having forgotten
whether I like it or no, family is
the weight of dead angels; those
angels died under the fresh water
laps of regret. But neither angels, or
anything else matters right now. It is
the absence of her skin which presses my
spine closer to my ribs. My words bend
and twist, stretching, and every time I try
to inhale her breasts my lungs feel crushed,
and as I want the curve of her thighs to stay
inside my head, my bones, I know it is because
they are the last station of comfort under the
blue dome of hell. It is an orgasmic want,
the desire pulsing at regular intervals, jerking
the frames, kicking the core, beating the thoughts, the grand expectance
of a rush, that explosion of rush left unfulfilled.
Just like the prophecy given to me
about the nature of woman,
it is a secret which is known to everyone that
love will fail at the roar of lust. But I am not thinking
of it right now, not because it is not true but
because I am waiting to be
covered and protected from the illusions
which pound my head day after day, illusions
that repeatedly scream, we are
alone with our lies. She is my savior,
and she is far away, not forgetting but wondering
why this man born to climb
walls has collapsed at her feet, bruised,
with all his loves and dreams scattered around him.
At her feet I want her, not to save me but
to make love to me, to tell me in all my
confusion, I will not forget her smell.

Tame

have I become tame?
waterfalls of promise falling over
the edge, the hold on what
used to burn my palms slipping
into the darkness of memories,
am I giving up on that which
gave birth to me: the anger for
a voice for what is right,
my direction is misleading,
the direction of my foot following
blood spilled long ago. where is my
guide, those who were killed
by my resignation, the dejection
seeping into whatever I do, the
depression sticking to whatever I
say, I can't move without saying
to myself I am still so young, have
I given up so quickly, it is the
unbearable heaviness of the largeness
of souls of the world, the enormity of the task,
there must be a way out,
an out into some light; I'm
bound, bound to the fear of dying too
quickly, of not having a couple of hours a
day of comfort, of not having kids
because I was so involved in a
social cause; I think it is the
hunger and sickness which has
made me tame. it is a question of existence,
have I betrayed my destiny,
have I become tame
after so many loud voices,
it must be a temporary numbness,
howls of patience scratch my neck,
ancient wisdom's whispering riddles
which don't make sense to me,
I am rotting inside,
I am falling deeper and deeper into vagueness,
and the riddles grip my eyes,
I can see, I can see the answer
but it does not make sense,
I want to end the struggles,
where is the way to go
I mumble under the distant horizons,
I can't be defeated, not this early in the game,
have I become tame

at this minute I have

stay

there is no knife which cuts water
into two, no separation exists between
the salt and death before one drowns
and so I look at the window ahead me
wanting the knife, that tool of clarity,
searching in my head, words, will my love survive,
it is something revolving and spiraling into a
whorl, and the tempest brews, the breasts
I kissed this morning receding into memory,
serenity drip dripping away,
then speech coming from my throat
not by request but by demand,
sucked up by the vacuum of fragmented
souls which reside and eat off the flesh,
speech making your tongue stick to the
roof of your mouth and then impulsively
separate with a silent vengeance,
stay
I know
for the sake of God
stay
I know

Awash

for Mary

It is as if the root of all the trees
started to think that my chest is
the earth for the birth of their
dreams, the color green bleeding and oozing
over my nipples, the brown fragrance
of bark splitting through my navel,
the yellow remnant of dying leaves covering
my neck, I am awash in a forest
that you and I have started to call love.
You do remember when we argued,
my voice turned into a dark sinister
crow, my hands gripped my legs
in anger, my vision blazing holes on
the walls where our love
was bouncing in a narcotic confusion;
I am awash in that and what comes after:
the collapse into arms, the melting of skin
into skin, the dripping of tongues into
mouths as we smell each other, the panic driven
scratching at explanations, the dissolution of
today into tomorrow. We have created stories
and I hate when our sentences crumble,
and we are more animalistic than animals.
Believe me Mary, being awash in you, by you,
is not easy.

Pulp Fiction

Nothing really makes sense anymore
to me and that is okay by me.
I am not interested in why
the world has become a car
going round and round, circling so fast
that it is breaking apart at its seams. I
want to be surprised, to be titillated, to be
a witness to eccentric, quirky conversations
which starts with a kiss
by a stranger and ends with a
line like, You know, I am not
out to save the fucking world
If there is a reason to live, I want
it to be captured in a
head banging, shouting, cathartic
song which I can bellow out
while watching a movie that hits me
with a hand of images
and emotion that when I sit
on my chair at home I see
my shirt is soaked with blood
and anger and passion. That is
what I want to eat; passion.
Fuck the job, fuck the future,
I want to chew on passion
and go high on it, snorting it
till my nose drops off. If there
is an adventure, I am game, the
tell tale battle of good and evil
be screwed, the adventure I want
to be a part of has to be a whorl of
disconnected happenings
held together by one and only one
desire. I don't want
to see you shoving morality
and meaning into the milk of my breakfast cereal bowl,
I have given up on them. I pray but it
is on my terms. I kill but it is done in
secret. I want
the passion to be of something
new, not of the old pedantic
bullshit which has choked
us to starvation. It has to
be passion of life, of being
alive and no more. I mean it,
no more. I will be no
part of it and I am not going
to fucking save the world either.

Lapiz Lazuli

for Charles Bukowski

Sometimes, after I come from work, I want to hang upside down
from the ceiling in my
apartment. I want to grab onto
that blood rush. The other day
I am driving from work and
singing at the top of my lungs,
my other colleagues on the road
thinking why is this madman
not realizing he looks like an
utter fool. I say to myself,
screw them, it is my car, my music,
my space, and it is something
to kill the boredom; I hate
to see asphalt pass under me
without recognizing my presence,
my life; the asphalt will not
hypnotize me. But I want
that blood rush bad. All
the confusions of the day will
coalesce from my feet onwards
and ram into the walls of my head,
disintegrating into little frothing bubbles
of laughter. It is a small
thing to ask. A small rush, a
tiny addiction. The only way to
keep the hovering gargoyles of hell at bay.

Passion on a day when it all seems dark

for Mira Celikol

Sometimes, when you are watching the sculpture
you created of your daughter, the one that is curved
the shape of the wave which destroyed Atlantis,
you wonder, is she going to get old the same way
you did. The light is shining from the window,
onto the dining room table, the phone is silent,
your husband is still sleeping, there is this singular
time after a long while when you can cradle your
head in your hands and believe the gods above be
fucked, life will explode in your glory tomorrow.
I know, I know that behind the collage of your arteries,
you remember the dreams you are having for the last
couple of days of how you belong to the streets and
collective memories of Toronto, of how under the
city you grew up in and would like to die in, runs the
smell of the Volga. And in the dream, now by the
dining room table, you can see the horsemen in their
cloaks riding up to you, beckoning to you and saying, you can come
back to them as their rightful chieftain. Your black hair falls
over your face, the glass of water in front of you
holding all the words you have never said to
anybody, you are dissolving into songs of
womanhood and fertility, the songs to which
you danced naked. Your mind is made up, today you are
going to immolate yourself and have your ashes
wrap the world in a blanket of desire and longing
and comfort for the souls who have burnt into the darkness
you will not sell yourself to. You are massaging your
eyes, they hurt from the pain of seeing so many people
kill, mutilate, dismember so many other people,
but you are not going to succumb,
not today. You have staked your claim,
the ache in your bones is absent,
you hear whispers of how your blood is immortal,
the ghost of your grandmother approves of the
way you knead the bread,
fear of drowning away from the grasp of hands that
belong to the ones you love has disappeared,
you are going to live today,
even though through the sounds of the waves, the
hooves, the cars, the chatter, the wails of the bleeding
world reaches your ears.
You know exactly what this is all about, Mira.
You know exactly the name of this, Mira.
Passion.

Slaughter

I am not going to be human with
you anymore. It is no longer a
question of education or culture
or divinity. I am going to take you
and tear your clothes off and tie
you to a chair, naked, your buttocks
resting on cold wood, your muscles
aching a bit from the ropes. Then I am
going to take my clothes off,
take a set of pliers and pull
your nails from the roots of your fingers,
one by one. You see, I don't care
about ethics, God, redemption, or
sense or anything. I just
want to torture you. I will then
cut off your ear, your
tongue and glue your eyelids
shut. I will pass hundreds of volts
through your testicles, keep you
hungry for three days and then I
will break your ribs with a
hammer. By now you will be
screaming for mercy and at that
time I will pass a bullet through your left knee cap
and break your right arm. If you faint
I will wait till you become conscious.
I am going to reduce you to clay,
bit by bit, piece by piece.
I will slaughter you slowly
and at the end of it all,
after I make you swallow rat poison
while I am reading you
a list of how many you have killed,

I will carve on your chest
with a sharp kitchen knife,
for the dead.

You bastard, you warmonger,
power fucker,
I will give up my humanity
to restore the ones you took,
I swear it
and to hell with everything else.

Black

Couple of days ago I started
to wonder what would
I do if I got cancer;
I would give up.
My hands will turn bitter,
and all the desires I ever had
will melt into the concrete
sidewalks outside.
I will give up,
ask for death
and in pain watch
tv till I waste away.
This is not going to be
a dream, not something
I am going to escape from,
fuck that,
all the whys will dissolve
all the hows will evaporate
and I am going to
write nothing
embrace the darkneses,
wallow in the depths of self pity,
this will be the final frontier
the final straw,
I will be on the verge of
the last push,
slip and slide away into
the black of cancer
flipping a finger at hope
and the beckoning angels,
fuck them all.
But one thing I am
not going to do
is cry.

Yesterday

for Humaira Shams

Yesterday, over the phone, I talked to you,
your last name different and the breeze in Rawalpindi
nothing like the brown restless hot howl of hell blowing
across Karachi. I wanted to hold you, and tell you that our
innocences have been trampled,
our desires have been reborn elsewhere, and
I still remember how I loved you. The words
trickle down the throat, and I am
thinking to myself how love changes over
the years, how we have collapsed into dust and
risen again so far away from each other.
I am looking right at and through the window,
trying to believe that when I jump, my memories
will survive my fall, memories which belong
to our children. And lovers. The falls belongs to me alone.
Ten years ago I wanted to melt
into the breath of your skin
and coagulate into explosions of love under
your veins; al that undone and so much left
unsaid. And now, look at us, our souls
gifted to another, our flesh licked
over by another; doesn't the
damning reverberations and clanging of
what ifs disturb you at night. It is not
obsession, it is not a lovers love anymore, but
the wailings of holding on, grabbing onto
what keeps our bones glued together,
making us kneel at the time of day everyday when spirits
of dead people whisper into our ear,
the people you were born with hold
the key to your reincarnation after death.
You are the key, and every piece of you
makes you kneel and hurt at the knees because
it hurts so much to love another over the phone,
on letter paper, in conversations of casual acquaintances.
But you know we will never let go because
the precipice is at the edge of the door of your
living room, the ground is slippery from
the tears we said we would not cry.
It is hard to be human, to not be a demon.
Yesterday, after I talked to you, over the phone,
I rested
and told the devil to fuck off.

vagina

this is what he did:
he covered the iron rod
which he found lying on
the floor beside the corner
of where the walls met
with the fire from the
stove where he had his
food cooked
and he shoved it
through his wife's
vagina
through womb
through flesh
through love
because he was angry at her
let me say again what he did:
he shoved a glowing, red & orange,
hot, wild, uncaged, inhuman
rod
into, through,
his wife's
vagina

how the horror
drips into my senses

I have forsaken you.

whore

for the last three days
I have thought about how I had wanted
to make love
to a whore
for a reasonable price;
the reasons I don't know.
I bought a weekly for 75 cents
which was for gentlemen only.
I read it thoroughly. Some services
were available for
free, just for pleasure, while there
were some that were priced
suitably for an afternoon, or a night,
or ½ hour or a full hour of
unforgettable experiences. Several
women were asking for \$150 and above
for an hour while others
were honest enough to ask for
generous men only. There
were a lot of pictures to which
I fantasized to.
To which I sold myself to.
These women could and would
do anything; they could wrap their tongues around you,
enslave you,
massage you,
do it in any position you want,
anywhere you want,
the varieties were endless.
And for the really brave
there were transsexuals with
9 inch cocks for dual pleasure.
Breasts, cunts, thighs, lips
all were mixed in together
in all possible combinations, all possible type and sizes,
and so I fantasized.
What if I did do it?
I did not need to and would not tell
anyone,
it could be my private secret,
a little orgasmic secret.
I just wanted to see
what it would be like to
fuck a whore
pay up
and leave it at that
it would be a walk on the edge
risk it all
love and all
all, all for a blast of one wanton
ejaculation.
I did not fuck a whore and today I am not interested. But I feel like one.

its not going well is it?

it is not going well, is it
you can't do anything
you feel fat and heavy
the world does not make sense
what you want is a mystery
to you
the day is a serpent licking you
with its forked tongue
nights are a vortex sucking
your blood from your veins
you are not alive anymore
are you?
what your lover says feels useless
is useless
the flesh on your bones
is a runaway train of self hate
you hate yourself, don't you,
shivers grab you,
hopelessness licks your genitals
you are spinning, spinning on
a one way fall onto a bed
of nothing
that feels like as if someone took
a knife and shoved it up
your ribcage and you
just smiled
you can't die, can you?
the energy isn't there
this is not going to end soon, it?
there is fear
but you can't even see it
the only thing you can smell
is that you are alone
voices don't matter
kisses are pointless
do you even love anyone anymore
there is no one even to blame
there is no one to help
you didn't have dream yesterday
holy fuck,
you are drifting away
aren't you
and you know what
I can't do shit about it.

tomorrow will come

when you look down below
from the window seat 26A,
from behind two glass pressurized panes,
you are thinking
the world is so big
that you will never see it all
and all of it will
never know you.
then ten million other things
rush into you
with a bullet impact of blue
and blue
and you find
you are telling yourself
tomorrow, there will
be a tomorrow
without the demons.

nirvana

Kurt, have you made it to nirvana?
are there lakes of fire with a cool blue
breeze blowing over making your long
blonde hair curl around your forehead?
c'mon Kurt, tell me,
has the scar on the side of your
head disappeared,
have the red blotches on your jeans
and shirt been washed by the
kisses of angels
in armor.
you know, Kurt, people are
killing each other down here,
are they up there also.
I have to know
for my sanity.
behind my eyes
is a black cancer of
faithlessness,
my voice has collapsed
into whispers,
I have lost my passion,
tell me Kurt, did you
show the finger to
that bastard who sits
in silent pain, did you show
the finger to the bitch
who has
given birth to us
and left us alone,
did you show the finger.
I have been raped Kurt,
my hymen has been ripped
and not by strangers,
my skin has melted into a
plastic stream of
unwanted tears.
is there a river there
where you can float
naked
unborn
not dead.
are there any more prophets or revelations
on the way.
do you want me
to go on being alive.
fuck.
fuck.
fuck.

father

I remembered my father
again
found my last letter to him
unread
the waters in which he drowned haven flown off
a cliff
not touching the edge of the paper on which
I wrote
funny, I thought, how his absence drenches my life
and my mothers
her hand pressing on my shoulder, her soul weighing
on mine
the sorrow of not telling him how he hurt us
dripping
in rivulets of regret into our veins, his face in
old photographs
saying to me, this is the way you are going to
get old
and I know he is somewhat right

once again I am wounded, drifting onto a shore
I left behind long ago, the redness of my blood tracing
the outline of my glide across prayers and conversations,
this never ending tug at the edges of my life,
all those words that were never spoken
lying unused and forgotten on the desert where
the ruins of Mohenjedaró blink at the appearance
of archeologists

you know, it is sometimes just too hard to
let it be

on those days when you return to be under the sky
where
he was your father.

deaf

I want to write something
that will
destroy us all
I want to become evil incarnate
and shred the
souls of everyone
into thin fibers
of agony
I am not going to be
a model of mercy
I am not going to sit
down and try to
understand
and be at peace
I am not going to think of
blue water and
green grass
and yellow sun
because I am black
and void
there is a limit
to everything
even wisdom
and love
I am at the limit
I have crossed the limit
I am on the other side
I am now deaf
your tongues are useless
there will be no remorse
no repentance
no fall
no memories
I am not going to fear
anyone
I am the authority
there is one single reason for this:
today, under order from local businessmen, the recipient of
a prestigious human rights award, an eleven year old Pakistani boy,
one who had been a child laborer all his life, one who
spoke up to become free, to be alive,
was strangled till the last words of his mouth were
please don't do this to me.
remember, there is one single reason for this:
an eleven year old boy was tortured, beaten and made
to taste, lick, eat, digest fear
death
and the price of voice
I am naked, I am red with Abdul's blood, I am an animal, I am God,
I am deaf
and I am your end

somebody bombed Agha's Supermarket

in Karachi
there is no hell
just the fires that burn
after the bomb
explodes
and leaves all the memories
in pieces
over the asphalt
in the parking lot
under the gaze
of the eyes
of the shoppers
and me
there is really
no one
responsible
is there
all of us
did it
bombed it to pieces
together with all the
memories
of my life
of your life
because we hate
remember the word
hate
hated
each other
but and I both know
we will continue on
in other aisles
under different gazes
because
bombs are like ejaculations
of sperm
born from the titillation of rape
it is all about
power
and
penetration

violation

this is a fear
that bubbles in my head
somebody is going to
violate
her
do her
like an animal
and I am not going
to be able
to even ask
for revenge
I see the images
broken into 1/24 second
frames
in color
the way her mind
wants to escape
tries
the hands that feel
her
the movement of her
eyes
reflecting off mine
the swoosh
of death
breazing by behind my ears
her breasts
red with her blood
his laughing
his fist pounding
and pounding
his hips pounding
and pounding
I see her naked
screaming
the images are not going to stop are they, are they, the images are not going
to stop
until
I get up
and holy someone,
help me before I do this
I get up
and violate him

we have all become animals

underwear conversation

true story, something that happened to me at the gym:
after my workout as I was standing in my underwear
starting to put on my shirt,
socks on my feet,
some guy on his way out,
stops short and
turn around to face me and say,
are you a Christian?
No, I am not.
I am a Muslim.
Oh, I see he replies a little disappointed.
There is a question on his face.
I want to help him out, so I say,
I went to a Catholic university for
four years so I am quite familiar with
the Christian tradition. Why do you ask?
Because, I knew that
you need the Lords help. Otherwise,
you are destined for hell. You are an
unbeliever and I want to urge you to
follow in the Lord footsteps and embrace
the bible.
Aha, I say to myself, this could be a
good discussion, and that in my underwear.
But, just as you are a member of a faith that is
born of a different tradition than mine and is entitled
to a way of belief, I am too.
Yeah, but you don't have the resurrection of
Christ or the concept of redemption, or that
Jesus is the Son of God and that he died
for all our sins.
True, for me and my tradition he was just a prophet
How are you going to get to heaven?
Good deeds, I hope, otherwise I guess I am screwed.
Just good deeds will not get you to heaven,
you have to embrace the holy Bible.
Thanks for the suggestion but I am not
interested I responded, realizing I have
still not buttoned my shirt. I proceed to button.
He says, Please I urge you, for your own sake,
read the Bible. When I was in the Air Force, I was just like
you and then I realized the error of my ways because my roommate
said, do you know God? I couldn't answer then but I can now.
Thanks. But I think our God is the same anyway,
whether we know Him or not, is not that important.
I feel sorry for you, but please, remember what I said, he said as he left.
And then I thought to myself,
buddy, five hundred years ago, when your religion kissing
the ass of the Ottoman Empire, I would have chopped your head off.
I then, put on my pants and went back to work.

ice cubes, water and whiskey

my father liked to have his whiskey
in his regular glass with $\frac{1}{4}$ water,
three ice cubes and the rest
with whiskey when he came back from work everyday.
Always drank three to four glasses every night
and never got up to make the drink himself.
It was, Kerem!
and when I rushed down from
my bedroom
leaving whatever I was doing behind
he would say,
Can you bring me a glass of whiskey.

I never questioned it. He did not question
my expertise at mixing it exactly the way
he wanted it.
He always thanked me,
sometimes smiled.
I did this for six years,
day after day,
only interrupted once for a

stretch of four weeks in 1985
when I was preparing for exams.
I saw him when he was drunk also,
worried when he drove us when
he was drunk,

and always had to nod my head in agreement and approval
when he told me,
Kerem, it will be matter of honor
for you when you will have a drink
with me when you become a man. You
will ask me for my permission and I will grant it.
I thought at that time two things:
1) I hate this;
2) I can't wait to drink with him and tell him how I hated making his drink.

My father died in a bus accident in 1991
and I never got around to telling him anything
because he thought
I was a drunkard in America
and had disowned me
after I told him I was not sorry for leaving
for America to get an education.
I never drank with him.
Never had the honor.
Till 1991 I had not touched a drop of alcohol.
Nowadays, in 1995, with friends
I will indulge a bit.
But I won't touch whiskey.

did you see the orange flame across the sky, yesterday?

yesterday, I did not believe in anything.
the day past me
covering my gaze
as if the gyrations that were
taking place in the orbits
of my skull
offended the sky.
what do you do when the passion
you have for the woman you love
for the words you speak
for the breath you take
is no more?
when the whispers
of how passion is dead
lie calmly in the azure waters of your soul
I begin to wander
can I ever become pregnant with a
world so fantastical that
every morning starts with a different kind of orgasm.
this grayness, this constant tepidness,
eats me alive
and I am left begging
for someone to claw across the sky
with their nails a tear through
which orange flames of the universe
singe our skins.
I say to myself
there has to be a way to
break through,
but the television is still on and it blares inanities.
I say to Mary
I am not in a conversant mood,
the book I want to dissolve into
still open and empty.
if there are desires
I had wanted last week,
yesterday there were none.
death did not frighten me,
all the evil in our lives
left on the kitchen table waiting to be acknowledged.
and around me I know
people are being no more
because of passion
or lack of it;
and I am caught in the middle of it all.
the only thing I fed on was the yellowish decaying silence,
the heavy mist of unspoken words gestating
and then aborting into wailing songs;
today, it is a little different...
there is a tinge of vermilion on the horizon.

it isn't you

it has nothing to do with you
it is me
the colors under my flesh turn into shades of
blue and black, tinges of red and light pink,
the absence of lies oozes from the hidden
pores on the back of my hands
and all I am thinking about
is how I have lost my love for you
it must be the animal in me
I don't know why
my love has disappeared like the shadows of my conscience
but there is this undeniable push to
run away and start again
all over the fuck again
with someone else
it must be the animal in me
demon seed
may be it is the thirst for variety
may be it is the quest for excitement
but you know and I know
this tumble towards a cosmic self-destruction
is nothing more than the blackness in my heart
the blackness of wanting to get whatever I desire,
getting the better of me.
it could be that I don't want to get old, with you or anybody else, it could be that the
blindness which licks my eyeballs is born from the incompleteness of my soul, perhaps
when the night wrapped itself around me the secrets that I could tell no one drowned in me
so deep that I have lost my anchor, don't get me wrong, I want to belong to you, I want to
be held in your arms but the poison of being
free
and you may ask, free from what,
needles itself like heroin into my blood veins.
it isn't you,
it is the world that is
collapsing
and I don't want to collapse with it
holding onto
the hypocrisy of I would not mind being rich
and help people on the side like a sick hobby
I am slipping under the
choices I have to make,
the water that I drank yesterday already evaporated
from the highways of my soul,
the agony of it all
and the only thing I can do
is to scream in silence from the hurt
and wait for the new tomorrow
when I will disavow all revolutions and desires
and blackness.

refugee

my home isn't anywhere
what I possess is with me
the food I eat much lesser than yours
and people who speak to me are
all strangers to the heart and mind
shelter is a luxury
and hunger an excuse for prayer
and salvation;
I am not about to give thanks
or apologize,
but listen to me,

I am a refugee,
displaced and misplaced,
defiled and destroyed,
enslaved and forgotten,
swallowed and spitted,
don't tell me you are sorry,

don't tell me you will try to help me,
sit down here
with me, smell me,
absorb me,
live the stench of my life

and say aloud
our children will have their own graves to die in
and say aloud, live the stench of my life,
absorb me, be with me, smell me,
sit down here, don't tell me you will try to help me,
don't tell me you are sorry, I have been swallowed and spitted,
defiled and destroyed, displaced and misplaced, I am a refugee,
but listen to me, I will not apologize, I am not about to give thanks
and salvation; my hunger is an excuse for your prayer, your shelter is a luxury,
tomorrow in the recesses of memory all of us will become strangers to the heart and mind
and people who speak to me will be reborn
but remember
the food I eat much lesser than yours
what I possess is with me
my home isn't anywhere
I blame you
and myself
because remember
I am refugee of body
you are a refugee of spirit
both of us refugees of soul.

pablo's ocean, pablo's sky

for Mary

let me tell you a true story:
a long time ago when the world had
just been born from the womb of our mother,
there were no oceans and sky,
a poet named pablo came up to the devil and said,
give the world some water
and air.
the devil said why are you asking me?
the poet said, my father is busy.
a smile licked the face of the devil and he said,
for the water and air what will you give me
to which the poet said
I will give you all my words.
the devil, one who had never spoken or written eloquently
accepted
and gave the world the ocean and the sky at the dawn of the next day.
in the morning when the poet woke up
he was dumb and crippled in the hands;
he went outside and saw the blue ocean
the blue sky
walked up to the house of the devil;
the devil wasn't anywhere...
he went behind to the garden where the fig trees were
and he saw the devil in mortal agony
doubled over, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth,
eyes rolling over, skin wasting away from his skin,
the devil moaned, you killed me.
that was the last words he spoke.
the poet smiled,
walked back to the ocean,
dived in
floated away face up
and disappeared.
that is why on days when the sun clasps the
ocean and sky together to breath forth the secrets
of all of us and all of everything,
you will see the waves
curl up and not crash,
the air will rise and not abate,
and you will hear a voice say
this is your ocean
this is your sky
and the devil has been dead for a very long time.

if I could

if I could tell you
I would
it is these acetylene choices
I have had to make
the redness of the days past
when the desires
that seeped into the dank crevasses
of myself
told me
go ahead, just go ahead
and do it,
veil it, shape it, lie for it,

believe in it
and don't worry about the rest.

if I could
I would
banish to nothingness
that part of me
which wants to
go high on wanton desires
go whoring on lonely adventures

if I could
I would
ask you to forgive me
to hold me and tell me
that these are momentary lapses of existing
that there is a certainty
of love and soul

if I could
I would
judge the men who kill
and take revenge for what they do
pay my dues later
forget the mysteries that surround me
live in a fantasy

if I could
I would
sacrifice my life
for a greater good
that will make me famous and
alive for the next hundred thousand years
but looking at all I have said so far
that is not going to happen.

evil

jesus, does it stick to my soul,
the filth of humankind
it is that evil that licks
my insides, it feels so good,
tell me, tell me, does it
titillate you,
does it excite you

abhorrent, red and black,
void of everything and
anything
this evil, think of it,
to which savannas in heaven
does it lead to,
think of it, can you do it,
what is stopping you,
come with me, forget
what you are leaving behind,
there must be something inside
you that wants to
come towards me
kiss me
open the lips that will swallow me
enrage me
open the heart that will befriend me
it is going to shatter you
it is going to bring you to the edge
it is going to erase your world
but oh, how, how,
it will make you
evil
and whole again
under the bedroom dreams of
the people who forsake you,
people who are anesthetized into
numbness
watching television,
you on the other hand

will taste
hell
while
heaven waits.

tell me your history

I saw you fall down
not in slow motion
not in a glory of life gone dead
just down
unexpected
and without much respect
your history
strewn on the iron floors and walls
of the city that gives birth
to more of your deaths
than we could ever have even
dreamed of;
I saw you fall because
I had to see this part of myself
that wants to rush to you and
pump your heart in that exact rhythmic staccato
drum beat that the American Red Cross
tells in its brochures...
you know, your eyes are
wide open wondering where is that
hole on your body that is there but
which you cannot feel; I am wondering
if a bag of crack is lying somewhere around
because I don't want the cops to find it
and blame your death on a drug-related
incident. god dammit, you are my son
and it was a bullet that killed you not
some bag of crack. you are looking at me
wanting to know if I am going to spend the
rest of my life trying to bring to justice the
hyenas that gunned you down and I am saying to you,
no son, I am not going to. your chest is not
heaving, the sneakers have relinquished their
grasp on the concrete, and the waves of
sorrow and lament that crash and burn
on our living rooms through our windows,
is about to wash me to the shore of hatred.
it is my hatred for poverty and ignorance
and it is on that shore I am going to grieve.
the red and blue lights scare even the
angels away, the stroboscope colors bleeding
into the sirens and loud whispers, you and I,
there together for one last time,
tell me your history son,
and I will tell you mine.

crucifixion

I see your blood is dirty
with the virus
Mr. HIV.
it got there by
escaping through
the guards that
defend your body.
Mr. HIV is a mad
person, does not like
other people.
he makes you feel sick
and weak.
we have medicines
that will fight Mr. HIV
but we don't know
if we are going to win,
so you have to be strong.
Mr. HIV is scared of
strong people because
he is afraid of the light
and people who are strong
always give off light.
I don't know why only your
blood is dirty
and not that of your friends;
you and I are not going to worry
about explanations.
tell me, have you had any
bad dreams recently?
I have.
I know you are not
scared,
you are brave

your child has AIDS
because this world is cruel.
there is nothing I can do.
be with your child till death
and never forget and allow others to forget.

womyn in a blue dress

it is the loneliness of
being in love
that grabs you by the collar
of your blue spine and makes
you
think that nothing in this
world makes sense;
all those memories you had of
the times when you were
a kid
rushing back in torrents
of time and
space
and you are left wondering
how much longer
are you going to be in love
are you meant to
be in
love
all these questions infesting
that core of your
soul and
being (or whatever that is).
tell me, tell me,
when you want to be alone
alone enough to
open up your chest
and look under your ribcage
tell me, what do you see...
it is this war, this constant tear
of flesh, this continuing conversation
of who am I, who am I with,
where am I going, where will
I veer away from the path
chosen for me
chosen by myself
nothing, nothing is constant
is the echo I am hearing in my
hands
and feet
the wind and sun rising
over the horizon of my shoulder
and I am saying to myself,
kerem, kerem, have faith,
you will not fall out of love
you will not fall over the edge of
loneliness,
kerem, you will not lose yourself.

confessions made high on doses of adrenaline

I am human
is something I have to remind
myself
tomorrow
I am tired of all
this wondering
in search of concrete
guarantees
that my life is going
to mean something
to the world
and to Mary;
I am tired of being scared
that I am not going to be in
love with Mary
or with anything
after forty years;
and my insides are crumbling
with the yellow sun
and turquoise water
dripping over my flesh
because
the sadness of the people affects
me
there is something bigger
than all of us
and I can not grab onto it.
when the angels came to visit me
I told them I was
a liar
greedy
selfish
dark
and had delusions
of people worshipping my existence,
all they said was
live
and so I am running in my maze
of which I don't want to be an exercise in futility
I want that rush
that outburst
that exhilaration
of expressing that core, fundamental, essential, divine
reason/emotion
of what it is to be human

somewhere in my soul my anchor is floating

heavens last stand

maybe it is the fact
they are innocent
has something to do with
children having AIDS
children crippled from the neck down

it forces us to be more than we ever could be
(transcendence, divinity, etc.)
at a price

I don't want to be more than I ever could be
for that price.

I remember Dali today

you know, sometimes the fire inside your head blazes all over onto your skin, the flesh melts and all you are left thinking, why does the world have to be so cruel. do you want to let it go, do you want to go, leave the rope hanging my the side of the road, remember the way your mother said goodbye to you when you became an adult, and so you remember why did you ever fall in love in the first place, the memories of all those days past retreating into the recesses in your head where the soul is absent; yeah, tell me about your soul, how it is tormented because you are displaced, you are a refugee, you are without a home and yet, and yet, you are still in love, inside that head of yours you are contemplating how is it possible for you not to be greedy, how is it possible for you to reach the voice of Siddhartta, and the weariness seeps like wet, unwelcome rain into your shoes, the idea of changing your universe, the universe for the better is revolting, the sense of loss is overbearing, and I know you are asking yourself what is that I have lost? I have lost my innocence, I have lost my compass, I have lost my courage, I have lost my ability to see, I am tired.

Yet, I continue to pretend to know things.

The pretense

condenses on everything I touch.

All this a cruel, cyclic

self-flagellation

for

being me. It does not make sense, does it?

Conversations, poems, novels, kisses, the contents of days, the contents of nights, through my

myopia, I know I have heard this ranting and raving before, there is a purpose behind it. It is well-intentioned.

All this ranting and raving

is a plea for a way to happiness,

a plea not to be tired.

matador

how long does the battery last on your wheelchair?
do the wheels lock when you are
trying to go down inclines,
tell me, matador, how many bulls
have you dodged with your red cape?
(does the seat make your back hurt?)
it is hot here, the people
are animals, lips smiling but
eyes hissing, smell of death
hanging in the air parachuting from
the canopy above, the smell left over
from the banquet of spirits forsaken and forgotten
by me,
can you tolerate the
constant moving, movement, around
you, tell me, matador, how do
you turn to spear the neck of the
bull so quickly, so clearly, can
you love for tomorrow, how in the
name of God do you get through the
day, through this afternoon where I realize
my courage is shallow to yours, when
will you give up, when will the
chosen bull gore you, trample you,
to the silence of all these animals,
tell me matador, doesn't the promise
of such freedom kiss your neck
to the point of suffocation.

shrapnel

it is the shrapnel
that digs into my
gut
my language but
I think of my leg
blood on my toes
my mouth
my leg, my leg
save my leg
my words
doctor, doctor
I must be able to run,
poet, poet
I must be able to live,
I feel ok
my leg, it will be ok
I know
I believe
we will all live
we will all be alive
trickling away
stay
I am not going to remember all the punctuation marks in my life
jesus, did you see that bomb sail
over the wall as if it was a
message from the lost angels of
Bosnia gliding smoothly in an arc
riding prayers that no one hears
leaving behind the face that
raped my sister (who is dead now)
ate the life of my
parents (who will not seek revenge now)
fucked me without consent
to spawn death
doctor, save the leg
I have to run
forget the shrapnel
it does not hurt
doctor
DOCTOR
SAVE MY LEG
I AM ONLY TWELVE
poet
will you save all the other Bosnias that are
napalming your skin

zecko, I can feel the shrapnel...

damage

he beat her so bad that
her nose was s-shaped
her cheek bone was caved in
then he threw her out of his
truck going at fifty miles per hour
that now makes her sway
similar to the silent prayers drifting
from her mouth to her god
she slurs while speaking
her eyebrows have now collapsed
into her eye socket
which is now shattered
her jaw is broken
her neck has a four inch long knife scar
her arms and legs are blue
she has intestinal damage
and there is so much more I don't know

I am telling myself
I will not allow this to happen
I am telling myself
I will not forgive
I am telling myself
revenge is justified

but I am not her
I will never know her pain
I will never dissolve into her
and coalesce in her veins
to soothe her dissolution

so much damage
an identity of loss
shades falling in slow motion over the horizon of souls
devils laughing with the hyenas

the loudness of the damage
a twisted miscarriage of love
I can never be the savior of all of you

but I will demand for the miracle
of retribution

then you and I with all our damage will laugh at the hyenas

war

what is it about the
reverberations that
seep through the floor
onto the paradise located
at the bottom of your mothers feet.
it seems that
the noise is of all
those people that
want to remember
why and how
other people died
in all the wars
of the 20th century.
I don't know why
at the middle of a sunny
day I start to think of all
those people with mud
on their boots, bullet
holes in their sides
and the chaos of the insanity
thundering over their heads;
today, I remembered again,
perhaps because I was drifting in memories
of how I first read Wilfred Owen and
decided that I wanted to chronicle
my world the way he did his,
or perhaps, it is because my soul
is to the brim with the kaleidoscope images of
war, or may be it is because
the vertebrae of my spine are made
of the blood of conflicts...
it is for the search for the real thing, isn't it
since there is nothing more real than
war,
it is the only something in our lives
that we are completely sure of,
whether it is our war against
our parents or lovers, whether it is against
the evil that we want to destroy for our salvation,
or whether it is against the truth of ourselves
and desires and reasons,
it is not just going to get easy,
there is you and the rest of the world to blame,
it is this war that booms over the edge of the world
and leaves a sweet sour taste in your and mine mouth.
I can't raise the dead, I can't cure all the sick,
I can't feed all the hungry, I can't love all of you,
it is this war
I am fighting and remembering the previous ones.

my friends, why I want to be old

my friends, I want to be old
because things will make sense,
things will fit,
love and lovers will forgive
and forget,
the madness of the world will not
keep me awake since I will be deaf,
I will be able to see
what I want to see,
people will think of my rantings
and ravings as senility but they
will be revelations which only children
will know and understand,
my heart will be clear and clean,
my faith and belief will be complete,
death and birth will be immediate,
pain and suffering will be finite,
all my hopes, fears and doubts circling into an explosion
of salvation and heaven,
my money and belongings not mattering to me.
when I am old
all my questions will have answers
and ones that won't I will not ask;
I would have won a singular battle with
time and space and hell.
something I would smile and laugh about without feeling stupid.

Nadya

I remembered her after
so long,
it makes me sad
that it takes me time
to remember someone
I had a crush on
long ago

and then
I heard that she broke
her engagement and
married a doctor
which made me start to
think
if she ever remembers me

I mean, does she at some
private moment late in
the morning tell herself
whatever happened to Kerem

it is so cruel that the people
whom we spend our lives with
at some point
disappear under the velvet skin
of getting older

rushing towards a night
when we would have lived,
the only thing left to talk about
to ourselves, telling the outside
to leave us alone,

is
I wonder whatever happened to Nadya

bomb

I am looking and hearing
how a bomb killed 16 people
and then how this man
shot two people in the head
all the details revolving
on and on into palms
and I don't want
to go to work tomorrow

because tomorrow I want
to understand
to be silent
to be still

and then I want to
give birth to the courage to
be able to
pray for all and mean it

everytime
everytime
this happens
and my hands
have all this senselessness
revolving
and revolving
into the palms.

Mary's breasts

Little light left
in the room, I am
ready to go to be bed,
her back is in a slight three dimensional
curve,
eyelids closed,
her cheeks on the pillow, the hair
languid,
neck relaxed,
her legs soft,
her breast facing towards

heaven
licking prayers from
the lips of ancient spirits,
I relive
the love we made
the sex we had

and as I am making
myself comfortable within
her sanctuary
I am resigned to those
moments
when I will not
be able to completely communicate
to her
how much I love her
and I how much sadness I carry

because the language for my love
and my sadness
does not exist
and I can't invent it.

Gift from my mother

couple of days after
she came here
to be present at my wedding
she gave myself and my wife a photograph album
of pictures
of me
of my life

mostly black and white
some color
all of those days gone by
watermelon on my lips with
innocence dripping when I was eight
cocky arrogance in high school
neighborhood cricket team
three year old talkative kid
my father holding my hand
at the beach
my father looking at me
my father sad at me leaving for college
there is me and mother
my mother when she was young
pieces of us on photographic
paper
several shots of myself and my sister when
we got along
in a large percentage of the photographs
I am smiling

smiling as if the world belonged
to me

and now in a very small way
it belongs back to me
again.

Something from Prestige Tailors

Two weeks ago
I gave my first tailored suit,
I couldn't fit into it anymore,
to an organization that clothes
the homeless and the poor.
That suit was tailored for me in
1985 and the last time I wore it was
1989; it is in perfect condition.
My father asked me if I needed
a suit and said that one of
the few things a man has to have in life
is a suit tailored for him. My father was
known for his good suits, specially
the ones he gave to the homeless. He took
me to his tailor, an old man who said to me
son, you have your fathers look.
In two weeks, after two visits
the gray suit was ready. The first time
I wore it, it was for a dance at the school.
My father came to my room, gave me some
money and handed me a bow tie. He said
a man has to know how to tie a bow tie otherwise
he is one of the crowd. He taught me the secret, helped
me put my jacket on, looked at me and said
he was proud of me.
That night and the other twenty or so
nights I wore that suit
I looked and felt like a man
ready to grip life by the throat
and raise it as a trophy while
others were just
there.

To my father I say,
I hope I have done you proud.

To the person who is going to wear that suit
I say
wear it well.

Open casket and other reflections

I went to Uncle Willys'
wake and funeral, my first
one here. The funeral
was something I understood
but the wake did not make sense to me.
Here was a man in an open casket
with make-up on his face, dressed
in his best clothes, eyes shut,
lips tightly pressed,
flowers surrounding him,
and all the alive around him
chatting
softly whispering to each other
or just walking around.
I walked up to him
and I could smell the chemicals.
I whispered a prayer and
wished him well on his journey.
As I looked at him, I almost wanted
him to see me, I said to myself,
for christ sakes
this dead man deserves privacy.
I wanted to say to everyone
leave him alone and remember him
the way he was not what he is now.

When I was leaving
I thought if Uncle Willy had
passed by the preliminary judgment of
the angels; was he on his way to
the light? As I came out of the
funeral home, I again, remembered
how I did not bury my father,
I again, remembered my guilt,
and I was reminded how I never said I
prayer for him in person as his son
before he was wrapped in his shroud.
Five years have passed by,
has he gotten to the light now?

It is all about light.
From birth to death, everything is about light.
To hell with the casket, the chatting,
the last good-byes.
So I say, burn me in this big fire,
and play some loud music.
Burn me to ashes.
Oh yeah, just burn me and watch
me howl the darkness into light.

Skydiving

They are just sitting there
waiting to die
drool sliding down,
eyes vacant.

There are some who in
moments of fear
scream
I don't want to die
and all we can do is
offer a glass of water
and say it is all right.
Their lives are finished,
they can't talk, and if they
can it is gibberish. They don't
even know who you are, they
don't even know who they are.
Sight, touch, taste, feel, smell,
there is nothing for them to sense
because they can't.
Meals are hand fed to them,
they go to the bathroom with
an entourage, the rooms are
cubicles with bunk beds that seem
like all this is a waiting
room before death.
The sun, moon, people, art,
literature, human endeavors,
numbers, physics, ideas, living,
this is
absent
for them, from them.
The cruelty of it all is so
overpowering.

So this is how I want to go:
if the day comes that I have to
be put into a nursing home for
whatever reason,
take me up in a plane

and let me skydive without
a parachute.
I want to die with the sun
on my back
the wind roaring into my face
and my being ramroding
directly into the belly of death.
Please.

On the verge of fading away

I have decided that our lives
are ours to take
if there is good reason for it.
I am not going to sit here
and tell you what are the long
lists and pontifications for all
the correct reasons; you go
figure that out yourself.
When there is terminal pain,
pain that is not going to end
because my body has given up,
then I am going to exercise my right
to jump into the pool of heavens
children. I am not craving for
understanding and I am not in
a position to provide it either,
but when I am hurting so much that it
hurts to even think and breathe,
when there is no cure,
when I look at myself and see someone
that is not me,
I am leaving.
And if I am too weak to do
it myself
I will find someone who will.
Look, this is not about the Hippocratic oath,
and it is not about how sacred life is.
It is about being alive more than
just sitting on a chair and hoping that the
benevolent one remembers you and takes
you away from the continuous earthly tortures.
I take responsibility for explaining it to Him that
I couldn't wait because
I am human
and if He says that I desecrated
the whole idea of me being created in His image
and that He really loves me
I am going to say:
a) if I am in his image then I should be immortal,
b) if he really loves me, where is the water to wash me of
all this pain.

There is this thing as human dignity.
I am not giving it away for anyone and
if someone needs me to give it back to them
I will.

Give me some more equations

I read these two books which described
in exciting detail all these
incredible things that our universe
holds, using exacting theoretical physics
and mathematical formulations. It turns out that there
are more than ten dimensions,
we can go back into the future,
there are other universes,
there are other yous, mes, others,
the entire universe is going to end
in so many billion trillion years and
then all this will come about again,
right now other creatures from other
galaxies have died, been born,
come and gone here, coming here.
Absolutely amazing stuff. Cosmic strings,
hyperspace, time warps, teleportation,
all our imaginations given a chance to
be true. All in equations. This one book
even proved that God does not exist using
a bookful of equations.
All these equations swirled in my head for weeks,
I felt inferior to the people who had come
up with them, I felt sad that I was going to be
long dead before any of these things came out
to be true, I felt angry that we were still killing
each other.

But you know, every time I think
of space and universe, I get a high
and I am tripping.
Give me some more equations
and I swear I will pay you back.

Apollo

It frustrates me
angers me
saddens me
reduces me
destroys me

that I have not and am never going
to walk on the surface of the
moon

it gives me love
gives me passion
gives me fire
gives me life
gives me freedom

this fact of my birth and death
that I have not and am never going
to walk on the surface of the
moon

either way you look at it
I am not at peace,
the moon could care less
and the rest of us
are clueless
about everything

Mistress

I believe in demons and angels
and everything that
goes with it
but what if all that
was false.

What if there was nothing
before I came and there will
be nothing after I leave.

All my living basically not having
any meaning. Life and everything
associated with it having nothing to do
with heaven or hell, redemption or eternal
forgiveness. But instead, sort of like a mistress; do whatever
you want with her because
you are paying
and the only thing that is important
is the quality and level of
pleasure and desire. Basically,
how good you got sucked off.
Maybe it is a little more complicated
than outlined above,
but what if it isn't.

Yeah, what if it isn't.

There is a pale horse coming

and I am wondering
why Mr. Samad Shaheen
had to die like a beaten dog.
This man was lying there in front
of me soiling his bedsheets
unable to hold his bowels,
groaning in pain, asking the
God above, please let me go.
Mr. Shaheens' hands were shaking,
his eyes almost blind, his bones
stretching his dry skin, the cheeks
sunken, the hair decaying, rot spreading
all over his life. Slowly, so slowly, he slipped
into a deep mist of secrets, I was left watching
a man who, when alive, had stories from the
days when he was a student in Holland, told me
I shouldn't be thinking about girls, showed me books
which had Samad Shaheen, Paris 1955 signed on
the first page, cautioned my father
that the idiots who ran the government were
not only stupid but evil, respectfully informed that
the during his last days my father was insane; all
those stories, all those times he recited Urdu poetry,
all those moments when he used to say, hey, Kerem,
its Prince Kerem, the gift of God who is blessing us by
his presence.

Shit, all those days, all those days.

The last thing he ever told me,
Kerem, I want to die.
I want to die.

You know, his sons were not
there when he died. They said
they were too busy to come.

Mr. Shaheen, tonight I howl for you.

Death, tonight I will ride the pale horse
over the walls of hell, into the meadows of Paradise.

Branded

For the last so many days
I have been continuously remembering
the way the airliner went down over the
Atlantic, and the way this kid was shot in
the face. All I am able to understand
is my inability to even latch onto
that fear, that fucking fear
which must have blazed through
the souls before realizing this
is it.

I have this voice, this picture fucking
branded into my head, of that airliner
cracking, breaking into pieces and people falling,
alive, and that kid feeling the bullets ram through
the very inside walls of his head, all this pain,
all this hurt so
so very so overwhelming
futile and
sad.

There is an urge towards
silence,
a desire towards
wailing.
For my sanity, I have to be
able to do both soon.

Envy

Every time I hike
up a mountain I remember
that there is Mt. Everest that I
will never climb. There are many
reasons I will not climb it, perhaps
some of those reasons are excuses. I
think this way most of the time.
And there are those very simple
moments of reckless clarity and wanton
wisdom, when I know I am capable
of doing whatever is necessary to climb
28,000 plus feet. I believe that in these
moments I envy those who have stood
so high on this world that they breathed
the purest and thinnest oxygen enough
to leap from
my present life
to another one.

Then there are also some
nights when I remember
the names and photographs
who died there; they are still there
frozen, quiet, part of the majestic
till it all blows to hell.
And I want so badly to climb it.

I want so badly to lick my envy
clean from the skin of my soul.

Albert, tell me

how is that you ended up having
a mind that could take a knife
to the smooth satin silk curtain of
unknown questions
and not have the water of the universe
burst its banks
and drown us all.

I mean Albert, you sliced open
the gut of all of those mysteries,
spilled out the secrets, all those
secrets that had been digested
so long ago, with such calm and
finesse. You didn't even blink, didn't
even cut yourself.

But I also know Albert you did not love any
woman, you forgot your children
and you spent most of your life wanting
to be alone with your equations. And I know
it was your choice.

Albert, I understand your choice.

Tell me, Albert, tell me, do you understand mine?

I am like a soldier

getting used to the end of the war,
sitting here
remembering
wanting
slowing down to a standstill.
the adrenaline is arresting
to a silent prayer,
my shock reverberating
selfish pleas for love and sex,
my grief waiting to be held.
look, I know that I am
asking for time to roll backwards like
a large tidal wave on rewind and
that I am stupid, brazen, angry,
and pigheaded enough to tell you
that there is this infinite sadness in
me that I can not name, this infinite
sadness that has to do with people
dying left and right, friends disappearing
from my life because of the effort to live,
this infinite sadness because of distances,
separations, inability to enable all the possibilities,
the futility, the death, the hunger for sense
and meaning.

this war, this soldiering,
all these dragons marching,
there is really no end.

Acid prayer

I am asking for belief,
and I am asking for faith.
I am saying to you that I need
a way to make love to my demons
and be able to walk away without
having claw marks on my back,
or maybe I need a way to run a knife
upwards through the ribcage of these
demons and be able to wash my hands
of the blood while crying.
What I need is a way.

inject me with revolutions
breathe me, contract me with convolutions
wash me in the river of passions
burn me with the tongue of salvations

All my sorrows, my fears, my trivialities,
I would like to kiss them.
These screams of solitude, silence, love,
these muscles that tear so often, I would
like people to understand me.
Make it easier for me to allow people
to understand me. Give me the
wisdom to curl up into the womb
of souls, give me the wisdom to unravel promises.

so tell me the darkness is afar
that the howls of chaos are silent
who is slicing me into constellations
I'm dissolving into acid prayers

I have my insanity and my evil whisper dreams to me,
sorrows real and imagined paralyze me,
my anger and lust invigorate and scare me,
I know there is forgiveness
I know there is beauty
and I know there is peace.
And I also know I am restless and a thief.

I'm swirling into acid prayers
believe me, I don't want to die
believe me, I want to believe

sometimes I drown in desires of recklessness,
sometimes I drink crucifixion till my lungs gurgle,
and sometimes waves of secrets rip the shores of my past, present and future.
Tell me, the vision I had of the magic of winds and rain to heal me
born out of the arias of angels, was it true?

I'm getting lost into acid prayers
who will find me, who will find me?

there is an orange-yellow answer at the end of the aquamarine road
where my turquoise soul mixes with the crimson earth,
guide me further and tell me if I waver.
weep, you survivor of hope
your prayers have come true

Joan

for my mother

there are mornings when I want to burn
for the world
there are those nights when I want to splinter
for you
but all of this, all of the burning and splintering
is because I want
more
from what I am
and have been given

and I will tell you now what
melts from my heart is
greed and love

come down, come down Gabriel
inform me of my lie
wipe the blood from my eye
put your hand on my shoulder and
whisper to me, Kerem, you are no Moses,
you are no Jesus, you are no Muhammed

and I will tell you now what
licks my ribcage is
fame and peace

presence of the past weighs me down
under a sea of day to day acrobats
where the guilt of seeing time run out
is an excuse to scream for an identity that will
survive my body

and I will tell you now what
turns me on is
secrecy and martyrdom

I'm sorry, Joan

Bleach

there are times when you wonder if the
person you love, is the one you really love.
people around you tell your neighbors how
the romance has gone, how the light
in their eyes has dimmed, how he is
thinking of leaving her for a new adventure.
you are thinking to yourself, how am I supposed
to be with one person all my life when the
spice of life is knowing a stranger beyond the
point of a casual acquaintance. it is
the unknown, of not having rested yet
that bleaches your heart while making
you an outcast in your own soul cages.
and I am saying to you, you are not alone.
my insides are crumbling to earth dust
because I am giving up on love, loves,
all of that; I don't really know why. it is
like an aspirin tablet that does not work
anymore; the want to love is absent.
you are sitting there thinking snorting
coke and getting laid is the next step
to nirvana. here I am, wanting to
believe that nirvana is a final salvation,
a final redemption from the hells of
obligation; nobody seems to understand
that the only intrinsic function of a
flame is to burn... I am suffocating
in the oxygenless air of obligation to
love. to love should be my choice.
to fall out of love should be my choice.
how the shit of my life infests, clogs, rots
the blood which will one day dry up and fail
to deliver all the promises it gave on the day
we were born.

tripped by wire

if I ask not to go
 will you stay
if I plead for you to hold me
 will you
all these days my blood has run thin
and I have been left wondering in
the tall green grass of my fears
you know, I am just hanging on
 to you
will you forgive me for having fallen
 in front of you
in weakness and self-destruction
the only thing left for me is to
 sing for you

the rivers have run
all the skies have been born
my back has been scorched by the sun
 again and again
I really don't know what I want
except for this lingering
 desire
not to lose you

I don't feel much for you

you said to me
last night, the lights
out, my head on the
pillow, the vulva of
the entire world
pulsating under my neck;
and I am fighting the
voices gurgling in my lungs
which are saying
how are you going to bring
her to love you
how are you going to bring
her your love
and I don't know.
I am in search for so much
or so I believe
my feet hurt from standing
on my fears
and secrets that only I
pass around from piece of
my insides to another.
You know, sometimes its so
hard to fight back that push
towards leaving it all behind,
jesus, it is so hard sometimes
that I don't feel much for you
either

Ed, this ones for you

it is my obsession today
to pray for someone
that I don't get cancer,
where does this obsession
come from, this tightness
of intellect and thought
whoring itself to the
expectation of fear and
slow death,
maybe it is because I want
to know how I would react
if it did happen,
how would I live,
how would others go
on living
or how many nights and days
would I cry
what revelation would I utter
before I leak into the unknown,
Ed, I saw you bleed
all over me last night
in my dream,
forgive me Ed, forgive me,
I washed your blood off me
and prayed I don't get cancer.

lament

this was when the earth was new:
an old woman was the keeper
of all the rivers and of love.
one day a man without a mother came to
her and wanted to drink
from the river because
there was a myth that it could
cure the deepest lament of
the soul.
he asked the woman
keeper of rivers and love
can I drink from your womb?
the woman looked at the sun,
touched the grass at her feet and said.
Kerem, my son, if your
lament is not true you will
die a torturous death.
to this the man fell on his knees
and said, there is a risk of
that but the sorrow of the
world has licked death into
my blood and I can't walk anymore.
the woman kissed my forehead
and gave me the cup, whispering,
Kerem, I am your mother.
Kerem is still on his knees,
cup in hand.

hell

he took her
declothed her
made her fear him
he hit her
he beat her
he raped her
he raped her again
then he killed
he killed again
he was calm
he was satisfied
satiated
then he disposed of her
tomorrow
he took him
declothed him, made him fear him,
he hit him, he beat him, he
sodomized him, he sodomized him
again, then he killed, he killed again,
he was calm, he was satisfied,
satiated, then he disposed of him
tomorrow
today
now, I am shedding
my humanity
to walk into the moans of hell,
my hell,
(help me, save me, forgive me)
fuck you, you animal,
I am going to make you pay.

kisses on the lips of demons

Gabriel, leave me alone, this is
no time for salvation, for the
next edition of your favorite book,
don't you see I can't even tell you
how irrelevant you are to me today.
I want to cry
because they cut off their ears,
they slashed their throats
till they gurgled like butchered sheep,
they cut off their breasts,
they fucked them till
they bled and hanged themselves,
Gabriel there is no sense in us
anymore, I can't see the way
anymore Gabriel, fuck you,
they took them and had
them dig their own graves
before bullets ran into their
brains like fists from the
womb of the devil, tell me
Gabriel, how am I supposed
to deal with all this,
they cut them up with axes,
they strafed them with machine guns, they
ripped their noses and testicles off
their bodies, there are demons
among us Gabriel and all you can
do is just be. there is so much
madness and sorrow in me today
that I am wanting to finish it all,
and release myself from this journey.

serum

about 4 pints of life I need
hold my hand
pierce my arm with your needle
and give me life
tell me I will be fine
tell me, I will understand you
c'mon, let the serum flow into me
let my love return back to me
remove all those fears I have
kiss away all those doubts that
are born in me at every sunset
can you see the color returning
back to my eyes
the color coming back to my skin
hold my hand
read to me folktales and myths
of gods and humans
hold me together
as I stop crumbling
and glue myself into a form
piece by piece
let that serum drip into me
liquid of life, liquid of thirst
kiss me on the forehead
believe in me
make me whole
pull me back from the darkness
pull me back from the struggle
by the edge of the abyss
stay with me
as I rest.

I wish I had talked to Paul Celan

I am here
and you are there
I suffer in my own way
but your suffering is so much larger
there is no release for you
and yet, I can hear you talk
to me and for this people
will think I am crazy, but
I am your son, I am a hypocritical
son who lies and sells himself
everyday because there are things
life has asked of him, there are parts
parts of my insides that scare
me but again, I want to
touch you
breathe you
vaporize into you
then I look over my shoulder
there is the tease of
reckless adventure
of giving into the reckless
demons and desires
to wash myself free
of consequences
but I turn back to you
because I know
the alternative is too easy;
I am son of your womb and semen
and I will always return
back to you.

all my love for you

it is his absence
which scratches
my back,
nail marks scrapping
the skin,
his last and first hug
for me,
son, look after yourself,
his last smile,
a birth of a tear at
the corner of his eyes
that has risen in me,
after those moments
he let go of me forever
beat my mother
stole the sun from my sister's soul,
the bastard tortured us all for so
long, endlessly, and
yet, there are those
tulip memories that
bloom at the base of
my neck, father,
father, you know
I love you endlessly,
but remembering you is
torture.

blue eyes

he says his sister in law
(does she have blue eyes)
loves crack
has been to rehab,
the parents have tried,
his wife has begged.
Sylvia loves crack,
trying to grab the horizon
kissing the soft angels
tasting the nectar of orgasm
upon orgasm
seeing the colors of her birth
there is now no return
but to death
he says
which I believe;
I look at him,
I want to say
Mark, she will find
her way, he says,
that bitch is not
coming near my daughter.
I wonder if she has blue eyes.

serenade

tell me, how do you
dodge that bullet
which has your name on it,
whom do you beg
to not split
your heart into two,
where do you run to,
under which shadow
do you hide,
don't your eyes hurt from
the glare of fear,
doesn't the lung collapse
from the compression
of the cages
how do you send your
love beyond the walls
of your projects,
tell me, wise on,
how can I sacrifice
myself for you.

this guilt

yesterday I did not go hungry,
I said, yesterday, my
blood did not evaporate.
the roof over my head
did not crumble,
my dreams at sunrise were
still intact,
the river from where my
soul flows is still not dry,
but still
my heart is ashes,
I have cried days
and I have cried nights
because I am more
lucky than you,
because I am not able
to show the true face
of God and Satan,
and even though
I prayed days
and I have prayed nights
I will never ever
fully know you or love you
or hold you
or give you a cusped
handful of my breath.

freedom or death

this will be a minimalist
war
precision accuracy
of 20mm rounds
that will devour
me
either way
ask me:
which one will you choose.
I don't know.
there is family I have
to support and love,
there is a world I want to
save and leave an imprint on,
there is the dance & music
that beckons me to the promise
of real salvation,
there is my voice that was
born unchained but,
but,
there is my fear of choices,
of you,
of evil,
of hell,
of love & memories;
tell me is this war for real,
tell me are you the only one,
smell me, taste me, feel me,
look at me and ask me
which one will I choose.

I refuse to choose.

whore

I cannot give you my love
because
things are now different
choices have been made
and the claw marks on
the walls
are getting harder to make
life has moved on
because
all the reasons have changed

and you thought I was your angel.

LSD

I want to swallow
that pill
and get swallowed into
a monsoon of colors and dreams;
I want that danger
of fighting the demons
that belong to you and me.
Maybe it is my want
my want
to touch that fine line on
the horizon of my mind,
the horizon before the cliff,
the cliff before the abyss,
the abyss before the fall,
it is all in the touching
and to be able to come back,
you know, I just want the trip
and nothing else,
I don't care about the opening
of secrets, of the final frontier,
I just want
to go some place else.

you can have all my toys

I have no comfort for you,
I don't have my prayer of
miracles for you, simply because
you are not human,
you are divine,
you are the reason
why I tell myself
there is more to living
than pure love;
you are crippled, poor, hungry,
eleven years old, a Palestinian girl
without toys, you walk in
pain, you smile in pain,
your mind is just thinking of
today and all the tomorrows that
could have been yours,
how am I to
understand your life.
I am helpless,
useless,
the guilt all mine,
which is why
I need to hold you
and tell you
you are my saviour.

dead man walking

they tell me that my blood
is tainted
they indicate to me in
so many words
that my skin will shrivel
and shrivel,
boils and aches will
occupy my flesh,
my insides will rot
and break into tiny
pieces
and my soul will dissolve
into a collective
cage of unfair deaths,
tell me Kerem
will you sing and dance
in my memory every time I die,
in my memory every time I die,
will you write for me
every time I give up my right
to live to the devil,
Kerem, tell me, will you
remember me for the
rest of your life, till
the river bed in your soul
runs dry,
tell me Kerem, will you
live for me.

Salidas de emergencia

I don't get it; why would somebody, no a mother, beat her daughter so badly that the vertebrae of the child's neck break & snap, twist the spinal chord into convolutions of anger and hate, and kill her. didn't she see that whenever her fists hit the flesh, the skin would tear, the blood would arrive, the bone would bruise? I mean, she is a mother... all that screaming and yelling, the shaking and jolting, how would she have not see the soul of her own womb suffocate and collapse, disappear without a whisper; all those words that were exchanged, all that bond of mother and child which was eradicated, I don't get how it just did not register with her. everyday every fucking day there is another moment of desperation and failed escape similar to the previous, another moment of killing piece by piece, ripping the energy of innocence bit by bit, and I am at a loss to understand how can my race be this degenerate. in the image of God my ass; we not only kill each other but eat each other it pisses me off not because it is senseless, or cruel, or violent, but because it reminds me of the ugliness of us, all of us, and it reminds me to stop & be sad, to grieve, to try to do something to stop out spiral into madness, but I can't even believe in that. all I see is to kill like this is to reside at the apex of sin by the throne of It and It is here all chatters of meanings shut up. silence is my only refuge.

what do you do

what do you do, when this life
you have raised, is no more
because he killed himself.
do you crave for his presence &
think all this is a dream, or
do you get angry because you
feel cheated. the reason I am
asking is, because I
believe, at some point,
the living have the right
to ask the dead who
killed themselves,
why?
I want the answers to
the above questions,
so that one day
I can rest in peace.

goddess

you have come to me asking
for an unconditional torrent
of love, when there is so
much blame to throw around;
and I am wondering if it is too
late, all the past that we
have dredged up suffocating our
lungs leaving us unable to
raise the dead,
we will do it again you see
my dear goddess
the temple standing here
because of all the hurt,
all the coagulating blood
in our veins, who is
going to save us, who
is going to tell us that
our love is still alive,
that our lives still matter.
There is no one who can
make it easier, this pain,
this crunching darkness only ours
to digest, but I have heard
forgiveness is under the soles
of our feet and our struggle
towards light is no lie.

it will be ok

she is saying to me
how she had enough of my
father, how after all these
years the love was gone. They
were going to have a divorce,
she says, tears growing into
mirrors of grief behind her
pupils, cheekbones becoming
redder, lips quivering, she
had said ok to the divorce.
He wanted to leave her, us,
start all over again. She is
looking at me and asking me,
Kerem, now he is dead, what
are we going to do? My head is
bowed and I am unable to
console my mother, I am unable to
hold her and say, Mother, I will
take care of you, I can't say it
till I can understand how does
love die; we are sitting across
each other, our souls dripping
into the floor, childhood dreams, alive memories
drowning in sorrow & sadness – this
fifty one year old woman in
front of me is crying and I am without
answers. All I keep on repeating is, it will
be ok, Mother, it will be ok. It is the
only thing we believe in and understand.

right now

right now, today
I don't love you. it has
nothing to do with you, inside
me nothing makes sense and
nothing seems to be satisfied,
there is a desire to move on,
move on to somewhere, something different
and desire someone else;
there is only one reason for all this – I
am a coward. For all the revolutions
I want to give birth to, for all the
world I want to swallow in the
name of love, I don't want to care anymore.
I don't love you as I am
blind with selfishness, blind with
wanting to be reckless and
alone. Maybe it is a need for
a suicide from the daily
grind, this routine from 7 am to
10 pm, five days a week, but
there is more to it; I am
passing from the borders of love
to that of ambivalence because
I don't care anymore, can you
understand that, I don't care anymore.
And floating on this river of simple
explanations, I am not interested in tomorrow.

Eyelashes

for Rima Montoya

it is about 6:30 p.m., empty parking lot, I'm
done with work today; sitting
in my car waiting for it to warm up
so that all those nuts and gears
and metallic parts will be
ready to move me. The panel lights
are on, green and orange only,
the engine revved up, the seat
still cold, and I am looking out
of my window, far away when I see
my eyelashes in the dark reflection.
I blink, my eyelashes
flutter and I see it. Each eyelash
has an individualistic curve
to it, they are all in a smooth
line, arcing backwards, I remember
Mary's back, blink and see it
again. I don't hear the engine
anymore, panel lights don't seem to
be on and I don't
want to drive anymore, I don't
want to work anymore, think anymore,
tomorrow or the day after. I blink again and
again and again. I see it, see it, see it. That is
all I want to see. Leave me alone, I just want to
sit here and see the
eruption of a cluster of constellations and eyelashes.

the beast and whore

for Johnny Cash

this is a story given to me as a secret:
a long time ago the world was engulfed
in hot orange-red flames. there
was a man who prayed to the
gods above that he was prepared
to do anything to bring the cool
breezes he knew once as a child
back to the earth. the man
prayed everyday, all day for a whole
year before a vision came to
him which told him that
if he ran down to the last river
at the end of world on the
edge of the horizon and drank
the water, he would become
a tiger and the flames of the
world would vanish. after
many adventures he was able to
drink the water, becoming a tiger
and saving the world from destruction.
days later, as he was roaming the
newly reborn earth, he came upon
a beautiful woman. He fell in
love immediately and as he
was looking at her she
said to him,
tiger, will you kill me
and in return you
shall become a man.
the tiger asked why
she wanted to die, to
which the woman told him
she was a tigress once and
that a vision showed her how
she would become a whore
by drinking water from a river and so
starve the flames of the world.
the tiger and whore talked for
days, then weeks, then months, then years,
sun up to sun down,
he told her of his love,
she told him of her life
she once knew.
on a morning which has
no date or place,
the tiger killed the woman
he loved
and went on living.
He never killed again,
and never fell out of love.
And that is how the world blossomed.

bosnia

the mud, sticky mud and
above a sorrowful sky, raining
down secrets. pieces of clothing
clinging to the sticky
mud, a child to its mother,
the sorrow of the bones naked
unto the world, all that hate
and mud, polaroid's nudging beyond
the horizon of a gaze, wanting to
be seen one last time for the
persistence of memory and life; I am
trying to hold them still before
the stampede starts, of all this
rage and sadness. all of you side
by side, there is no flesh, no
features, no you to you anymore. these
sub-automatic images in my
head of you falling down into the
mud scared, dying within milliseconds
of an arc that sweeps your entire life,
that explosion onto you, the onslaught. those
loud rapes and slicing butchery seeping
into you, all around you, with
all the aching, you have run
to a stand still. the mud
grabbing me down, making
me crumble, making me die.
last words, last whispers, a last
testament of the freedom of soul
and spirit, where will I bury
you all in peace. hold onto
me and I will never let go,
we will not give in to the
fucking bastards, we are safe
in our prayers and tears.
did you sing before your voice
dismantled into vertiginous
disintegration? this mud is
so silent and I am alone;
have faith, you will light
my way out of revenge and into grace.
the rain, how it tries.
and the trees saw it all.
this is where we all coalesce.

sun

for Luiz Moreira

Roque, did you shout
freedom or death
as they poured gasoline
over you and lit you
aflake?

Roque, did you say
fuck you, fuck all of you
as they laughed and
pissed on you as you
burned?

Roque, did you forgive
and kiss them when
they were collecting your
ashes and putting it in a
garbage bag?

Roque, listen to me Roque,
will you hold my hand
when they come for me?

Yes, I know. You and I
are children of the same mother.

Alzheimer and me

they are sitting still, hands on
knees, eyes straight ahead,
lips moving silently, whispering
mutterings of how things don't make
sense anymore. I am thinking
where have they hidden their
passion of being alive, I want to
believe it is hidden & not
lost. talk, please talk, and tell
me all of this is an act, something
to brutally teach me getting old
is not a drive down the
highway of wisdom, nirvana and
fulfillment. I can smell
sanitized death here, the
dryness of thought and heart,
this is hell for destitutes. I am
so alone here, the door leading
outside is a portal to escape
from this abyss. forgive me, forgive
me for leaving you. Behind
me a woman is crying, saying,
pleading, I don't want to die here,
I don't want to die here. The nurse
gives her a glass of water, have the
water dear, have the water.

tug of war

heave, hold, heave.
the rope cutting into
your palms, your ribcage
and shoulders sore,
inflamed, heave, hold,
heave, you dig in your heels,
arch your back, tighten
your jaw, your thighs pushing
down, heave, hold,
heave, your lungs are
full, your throat screaming,
your eyes looking straight
ahead, heave, hold, heave,
and you, titan, pull, you
pull and pull believing
that in this single instance
of time and space nobody
and nobody can conquer you,
all the music, all the words,
all the faces you know
are absent, heave, hold, heave,
you pull, you slide, you fall, you
pull and on the other side
of the chasm above the
river of fire and blackness
you see fear in the eyes of the devil.

drive

driving to work, 7:04 am, and
I see the water in the
bay steaming, smoke emanating
from the pores of its surface,
I am doing about 48 mph, I
know outside with the bright
sun shining, a moderate chilly
breeze, it is approximately 32 C.
but I keep on driving, thinking
it is not that hard to walk on
water through the mist and
enter into heaven, hide away
from the madness that will train
and cage me from 7:24 onwards.
I don't stop, the car in front of me
braking because the
curve of the road is too challenging.
the red tail lights on the car
warning me to keep my distance
or else. behind me, another
asshole is riding my ass. the water
to the right of me still ablaze
in white fire, above, the sky
chattering to me as if I was the
day after creation. I want to
slam the brakes, get out, walk and vanish.
I don't. I arrive at work at 7:25 am. The
rest of the day is torture.

Hunger

All I can see is hunger,
hunger for this,
hunger for that,
hunger for food,
hunger for love,
all hunger balled together
in a cosmos of obsession,
hate and poverty.

And all I am doing,
all I can do is,
hunger for satiation.

Shell shock

for Wilfred Owen

Your knees are trembling,
the voices in your head
muttering
whispering
shouting,
all those dreams,
those horrors
the unstoppable shaking
the shaking
the uncontrollable shaking,
the hands contorted,
your spine bent, twisted,
eyes blind,
there is nothing, nothing
left for you to live for

tell me, how can I
swallow you ,
how can I not forget you,
how can I be your testimony,
how can I
and not have shell shock,

how can I
because I have never
been shell shocked.

how far away is the Indian Ocean from here?

for Irem Durdag, Raphael Alberti

so you hate yourself for not being able to believe
in people, you hate yourself for hating
me because you want revenge for all
those things I did & didn't do. you
have given up hope because life has
fucked you over ten times too many and
there is not much point to trying anymore.
you don't believe in love because we
are all selfish and evil, hurtful and out
to get only what we want, what we need.
people are dying left and right and you are
tired of caring because nobody else does.
you are rotting to pieces inside, your termite
ridden bones, hollow tubes of white and
yellow, because you see yourself
in this cage where nothing matters. you
can't move anymore because you don't
know where to move to. there are so
many questions, vengeance, discomforts and
tears under your skin that the immortality
you want as your birthright has dissolved
into a purple haze of turquoise nights
which beckon desires of swallowing
tablets of pure sulphur, vinegar and
benzine. faces in front of you are melting
into a dawn of scorching blood explosions
splattering flower petals on metallic gray
dreams that have old, dirty spider webs
convoluting around your hands. you know that
the iron of the stars is inside the molecules
of your eyes, but those stars are spilling in
seismic quakes of doubt, fear and loss, the
razor under your throat so close to the eyes
of the precipice. your self-esteem has
been gnawed like the moon in an eclipse
with nitric acid, the memory's of secrets
you won't reveal to me bouncing off the walls
of your head, echoing into a million
resurrections of the scorching screams that
resound of your father not realizing what
fear is before he drowned in an icy river
without saying his love for you was absent.
behind your eyelids, in the passageways
of your nostrils the charred smell of burning
flesh tells you, demands of you that there
is no redemption, grace and forgiveness but
yet, yet the moist stench of oblivion has
not yet ignited all your angels; the shadow
of evil has not raped you yet. that
darkness inside you which bludgeons the
skulls of all the animals that you see
feeding on trivialities wants the attention
of somebody to give a shit about you, to
give you the answer, to be at peace. and
you struggle with all the vultures which
roam the archway of your spine, beaten,
the naked matador – Collected Poems by Kerem Durdag

paralyzed, blind and voiceless, the silence
of the difference between the dead and
living pushing you, pushing you away from
the light of your mother. you want
an ecstasy of orgasm that will lift you
into an epoch where pain is fable, an old
tale where the distance between reality
and dream is immeasurable. this whirling
in your soul, the desecration, the violation,
the complication of your breathe that
is born by such great effort every second
by your diaphragm, you want it to stop.
to stop because you are tired, you are
tired. you want all your begging and pleading
for help to pay off, someone by now should
have been able to stick an I.V. into you,
resuscitate you, hold you head in their
hands, kissed your forehead and reminded
you that the demons, the devils, all the
ten million and one fanged hells you have
lived and owned and fought against are
no more. you want to be on your bed
and a vision will tell you the blades that
have sliced your life as if you were a
discarded dog is but a test of your faith
and you have passed this ordeal,
the songs you
have will no
longer vanish,
the show
of ablution will
now wash you,
you will say I
love you, brother,
and you will have become divine and digested
evil forever.
but behind you
the ocean is evaporating
into a blue pale cloud
of useless whispers,
the grass has melted
to a dark green bile
that is now your only food,
the poison from the
promises people you loved
that were never kept
is dissolving your feet,
the smell burning up your
lungs, all these meanings
you searched, you searched,
you suffered for, still not
there, still not existing at all,
the pain focusing on your
knees as you crumble,
and you are remembering
everything, every moment,
and you are screaming
what I have become dear brother,

you are screaming,

I am going to make you hurt
before I break, shatter, splinter
into a million buds of jasmine.

Listen baby, my insides are red and the bull is dead

Achtung Baby

Listen baby, my insides are red and I am scorched with love.
Flaked, black ashes of hate can
be dusted off my skin. I started as
the clown of doom, unwanted
by the deep ocean and the shallow
brown earth; now my eyes are
writing forgiveness on the windows
of houses where the souls of romantics
are locked. My knees are bleeding
from crawling on streets of cities,
my head has a bullet lodged in it,
my hands are without fingers because
the world cut them off and I am shouting
with the voice of a rejected lover
I will carry you, I will carry you.

I am scorched with love.
There is no hair left on my skin
and I am thinking to myself
shall I run through that wall of
red flaming dream onto the other side
where I will be alone, in solitude, in
prophetic pain, in mythic suffering
trying and dying in loving the world.
I will disappear with an explosion
in a long howl of I am free! I am dying
in love. Nobody will raise their
voice, nobody will cry, nobody else will
believe in love, nobody will kiss
me with their lips. On the plains
where there is green grass, I will
color it red without any rules,
without any speech, without guilt. I will
dig my own graveyard, my
love raining upon the looking stationary world.

I am scorched with love.
Blind and deaf, a fool of destiny
I was born to be the beast of
burden, on my shoulders I was born to carry
love. Every love, all love
is my burden. Love is my anthem,
the anthem of breaking the chains
of ignorance, ripping away the security
of comfort, I am the river of love
and until the end of the world I will
sing my anthem till I go over the
edge as a waterfall. Fill me with
your desperation, cover me with your
anger, slap me with your hate, beat me
with your power and I will spit
back love at you, I will spit it at you.
I am scorched in love.
I will touch every one of you,
I will pray for whatever you desire with
everyone of you – there is no escape from me.

I am a raving lunatic, I am a senile wise man,
I am a mother and father, I am
the creator, giver, provider of miracles,
I am the last god. My feet will walk
for you, my arms will work for you,
my face will understand for you. In the
screaming anguish of love I will hear
the silent, see the invisible,
voice the unutterable – in that anguish
I will forget who I am and lose my name.
But you will know me, I am red, orange,
hot all over with love & only love.

Say it: I am scorched in love.
In all the languages, say it so
that you can collapse into yourself.

Say it: Here is the match, be
responsible for having my face melt
in love as I scorch for the world.

Say it: Fool, god, inflamed, that
is what I am, the man who died
and gave birth in the scorch of love.

That woman from St. Petersburg to Moscow

(1)

On a window that is wet with fog she is seeing that her face is changing as the streets outside are starting to fill with people who are hungrier than her; her face is becoming more hungry for a book of words which she would give to them so they can look at her and say themselves all hope is not lost. What the people don't realize is that her eyes are made of glass having its own fog inside. She knows the name of the fog, the slave. And she is waiting for the day when she will shatter her eyes, release the slave, squeeze her palms together till the glass becomes sand and the skies of Moscow collapse into pure blue.

(2)

There is the sailor who laughs when she asks if people dropped off the end of the world. The man laughs at the same time when St. Petersburg yawns itself an autumn breeze. The trees on the sides of those long avenues where footsteps of Pushkin sang whisper a long winter is on its way, and the laugh keeps on rolling and crashing. It is a wave born when his ship cut the sea into two with grace and love because generations before had done the same. In his head, he will many times think of the world that is really separated into two but only until he can hear her say, did they speak Russian. He will laugh again, his friends wondering why is he laughing with vodka and music, everything will be clear and true, St. Petersburg will be the city his daughter awaits his presence.

(3)

All those students around her did not notice how she read those books as if they were fires needing more gasoline to be poured over them. On a wooden table surrounded by frustration and voices of small revolutions, she told the dissident how she believed in him and how Akhmatova will not have died in vain by the time she is done with life. Death and breathing were far from her mind, the thought of raising children not even a casual diversion; she was more of a dissident of being a woman who wanted no limits of chains on her body. Akhmatova stroked her hair and took her chains. The buildings in which she spends her time floating silent shouts of defiance so that they will rain down when the time is right, stand like bodyguards at the door of a mausoleum. Even though she is a student, neither the building, nor the books, nor the dissidents, are the

captives of her soul; her soul may be heavy but she will not imprison anybody or anything since she knows it is not a matter of belonging but making the choice to be a savior and not a slave.

(4)

Waiting for the door to open, she is waiting for the man to come in and tell her that she is being love unconditionally. But she remembers how last night she reminded herself that she will not believe him. The world is starting to turn too fast and love is no longer stuck to its surface by the glue of unconditionality. She is sure of this. Sitting on a chair with a newspaper on her lap, in an house which is hers, in title & property she will not open the door when she hears a knock. At the back of her head she sees horses running on the Ural plains, running on the Volga and there is an old man and woman eating berries under a tree. There is no knocking and history is back on track. In a room bigger than her heart she writes on the corner of the newspaper I have found my place in the world. Tomorrow, she might jot down something different but she will no longer wait for a knocking on her door – it's open and on the air outside one can sense someone has etched I have found my place in the world.

(5)

She is not an angel. More like a peasant who carries the knowledge of what the gods did the last time they were on earth. Hair pulled tight with a rubber band, a skirt that blends into the pavement and a woolen sweater which makes her look like a doctor, she walks on principles of modesty. One thinks she is hiding every secret of the KGB behind the perpetually kind smile but we are all wrong. Moscow is in the middle of a country that is like one big plateau and she is walking across this plateau every time her feet rest momentarily for each step. She will talk with her hands since her tongue is full, hands that are not afraid to touch the earth in all of us. People will say different things when they see her. Tanya M. is not different to every person but the same to different people. She talks softly, deliberately, asking when are people going to stop dropping off the end of the world.

(6)

We met by mistake. Humidity stuck to our faces like a plastic wrapper which made people appear warped, all their goodness ruling our perception, things are so different in Atlanta. If we talked, we talked of our lives and the lives we were going to have, without holding back, moving like a train non-stop from St. Petersburg to Moscow, over those tracks we laid down every time I asked her, "How is your soul?" We never touched each other but it really didn't matter; unlike our dead ancestors we first asked questions and then believed in knowing the texture of our skin. Some would say that this is not trust, I say this is faith in the birth of trust.

(7)

I think she had tasted the flavor of those long walks searching for love, loneliness and voice together with the ghost of Anna. Nazim is my second father. Both of us spelled out Anna & Nazim, the folktale, the myth of our present trying to explain to the wall around us in a previous life Tanya & Kerem created the fire and the word prophet. It was a warm day in Moscow and I could smell the sighs of the people who wondered if they really need to care about the floating spirits beyond the sky. Tanya is silent. She hesitates to move and then runs, holding my shoulder as my kiss on her cheek evaporates, the imprint of her fingers tracing out my name for my children. We will see each other again.

(8)

From an open window she sees through the mist of Russia. In front of her flowers without a name wave an ocean of belonging to her, a calling out, but she will not speak for now. Her throat is dry, her eyes in pain, all from starting to know that Russia is her slave now and she does not know how to be master. The river that flows through her chest cuts open the wound of helplessness of the sinking feeling into an abyss where legs and arms will not help her. It is all in her head, this future that she knows is true. She breathes in the mist, all of Russia, and sits on her wooden chair allowing the blue sky to put her to sleep because she knows

the choice to break the sky into thousands
of little tears has been made.

Give your hands to me

Give your hands to me
to brush away the glaze
off your eyes,
give your feet to me
to walk through the fires
of our necessary lies,
give your arms to me
to hold the falling
angels from the skies,
give your arms to me
to blow back movement
on those lungs which can rise,
my dear woman, kiss
me before I jump into
hate & loss & the past & magic
for the sake of timely wise demise.

I am singed by a shaft of sunlight
which came from her face. My
skin and muscles are burnt and
I find it difficult to move. It is as if
someone took an oak club
and splintered my guts and head
all over the world; but I know
it is not her with the club. It is this
illusion I have created to make living
in the present more
understandable. I badly want to hack
away the underbrush in my
head but my bush knife is blunt.
My uselessness sinks into my bedsheet like
sediment of love carried and
deposited by the river whose
name no one knows. I desire
release and considerate touch,
a piece of bliss I can chew on.
I am carrying the sin and the
moon in each hand and the
crosses of sinners on my back,
& I am sick & tired of it.
I want release, flesh and more
souls; right now I can calmly
kill myself or cry at a song that
needs to be sung over and over again.
Somebody please give birth to me.

Give your desiring winds to me
to filter the pebbles
of doubt and devils,
give me your sin & moon & cross
for me to carry beyond
the mountain, into the valley,
give me your sword and pen
and I will cleave goodness with
peace into people as I write a new life
for them, give me your love and wandering
when I trick the lock into opening
which bind your knees
my dear woman, help
me in bleeding color to the horizon,
in scrawling five billion names on
all the wall, help me to love
as I drink time mixed with tears.

My dear woman, please give birth to me
once again, for the last & final time.

Raise the kingdom

Raise the kingdom
from under the waves
of regret and bleak
whispers. Swallow your
mumbling, lift those legs
from the quicksand of
doubt, cut the fog
that belongs to our
fears – raise the kingdom,
raise yourself
and break the glass
in front of your eyes,
drink the poison
from the fountain where
angels are encased in
stone, sip in the smell
of the dirt that weigh
down our lungs, feel the
roughness of my face,
my compatriot, my friend
raise the kingdom,
move with rhythm where
the revolutions deafen
the ears, crunch
on the watermelon seeds
of my desires, you want me,
I want the world,
save me from death,
I will not surrender
but whatever you do
raise the kingdom
over the love of kisses on my clothes,
under the sight of pain & hurt on
your chest, we will walk
on without shoes on a bed
of seductions to rescue
each other, this is trust
for this and more
raise the kingdom,
tired and more will tire
these lives will longer
be a part of your lies
spit out the choice of your voice
bellow out the anthem you believe in
take the glass and reach out for the ocean
spill over the edge
rip brightness into the abyss
we are all dangerous
we are all lecherous
but we will
raise the kingdom
raise the kingdom
of ourselves.

Reigns of immortality

When you curl up like a ball
resting your head on a pillow
unable to shut off the song,
to numb to close the way
of the approaching desperations,
all those actions hovering like stench,
spent like a dry wind, a dry ocean,
wasting away in expectance of a touch
indicating to you that you,
you, are not alone,
not the only soldier left
standing alone in hell

remember me and how I
carried you on my shoulders
now that I am gone
there are no more excuses
this is cruelty and we can't
do anything about it

it is no secret I depend on you
for immortality, no secret we
are pests feeding on each other

there is that tug ripping the senses
out of my head; I have to go

remember, for our sakes remember,
we are not the only soldiers left standing in hell.

There is dye on our lips

Don't love me
your face melts into my hate
like pink dye in a glass of water
don't put your lips against mine
your breath rips my senses
under the breeze of darkness
don't touch my arms
your fingers are thorns
drawing mysterious dancing figures on my skin
don't look at me
your head is twisting in a whirl
and I am imploding into an anarchy of faith

but I still want you to remember me
I still want you to want me
if there is a future beyond the door take it
climb over the wall I have built
forgive me and enter my minds
cure me and break my binds
show me the way
teach me to pray
don't hide, I am running to the outside

I know I can't love
so tell me if I will survive yours

Screaming whispers for the day which belongs to you

You are reaching the end of the day
where under a yellow of quietness
you wonder how dark your heart really
is – it is past midnight and you have
no idea on how to swallow your
disgust at unrequited love. You
want to be alone, to sort out
those millions of swarming ideas
that are melting into the one of the
dying philosophies in your head;
your eyes are open, feet firmly
planted on the carpet, your
buttocks sink into the sides
of your wheezing bed and
inside you are screaming
at your confusion till something
in your soul reminds you
we are all doomed to design
our own deaths. Where does
this leave you? The music
of rebellion blares in your head
as if you were in one of those narrow
cobblestone streets in Istanbul with the
taxi drivers riding your fears – c'mon
nobody is going to break you,
you say to yourself,
but damn you can't think
the good for the people in front of
you and because of this the
smell of autumn reaches your nose.
You don't want to love anymore; put
that Cyrano de Bergerac costume back into
the closet. You saw the horizon a
long time ago where love meant a
liberation from isolation, a
release from the tease of angels,
a sprint into the light of day; what
you are holding in your hands is not love
but pieces of the sun which are
rusting into shards of bitterness.
Against all those expectations of your
mother and father, you have finally
settled down, under the yellow
light of a long darkness that
does not end beyond the reach
of your arms. And the flag
of love is fluttering, high on
drugs, outside your open window.

Movie

I want to collapse into two arms,
into the arms of that woman
who would not ask
for my love, for any love.
Instead, she will allow
me to say, "You are beautiful,
and I don't know why."

She would be sitting on a
shore where the sand is only
brown and ours. There is blue
in front of us, behind us no
one can see. Like an old
color lithograph, her skin
blends into everything; the
shape of her dress just about
slipping off that soft shoulder.
Then I would kiss her.

There would be no afterwards.
We will be stuck in a frame,
the salty air blowing at our
corners. These two will not
mind. They never kiss
but sit there, the man in
his trousers on such a
beautiful day, the woman
asking for nothing, half
bare. I wish I was there.

Where angels fear to tread

I am no longer willing to fall in love. That commitment of self sacrifice will no longer burden me. Sometimes I think falling in love would be like going to a small village in Czechoslovakia where the noise of cobblestones and the paint peeling off the metal table was the only thing that reminded you that being alive is not really a great gift. The uneasiness of knowing that love is now going to be a game, where there are no crowds, no longer bothers me. I have succumbed to being a victim of thought, if that loud crashing in your head that tells you even love has no limits but you are blind and that is the way it will always be.

But then at those hours when your doubts are standing in penance in the corner of your wall, and your eyes reflect away the world's hate, you yearn for the touch. Then I want to use my arms to cradle the woman, picking her up and telling her that I need her, the world needs her, the grass outside needs her. Without leaving, we would walk on wet roads, water gently falling from the sky, silent in our confusion. In expectance of some magic, we will kiss and make love, like two warriors on a quest for a valuable something. It will be a forgone conclusion that we are neither warriors, nor magicians, nor people who can lift and carry each other. In dismay, we will buckle at our knees and ask for each others mercy and forgiveness.

Can I forgive though? Not really.
So I get up and barefoot walk
on the wet road, water like stones
pelting me. It is night now and I
can hear my breath refusing to
coalesce in front of me. But I walk
on, my feet becoming my hands over
the woman's face I can't love. Out
of air, in all the darkness
and sound, I fall onto the white line.
I have reached the border
and for some disturbing reason
I for once am glad that
I can go no further.

Name between the flames

A name is given to you
as if the ball of flame
in their hands were too
hot to handle. Your skin
singes and you wander if it
is worth it to walk around,
your hand red from the glory
of knowing this is the start
of a flight toward immortality.

The name is voiceless, it only
speaks when your eyes flicker
under the blast of pin pricks
from watching your capacity to
love, dissolve into a spark of
fear, above in the high tension
cable wire you see your life
escape into other peoples homes.

Then you feel that loss of control
the music in your ears slips into
the waste bin of silence and your
head aches as your name is hammering
against the confines of your skull.
Sick to the gut, sweat collecting
slowly under the eyebrows you pick
your name and throw it out of the window.

With a name you will walk on
the sea shore with wet sand
grunting under the weight of your
loss. You will be empty so you
decide to fill yourself up with
salt water, so that your hands
will explode in agony but at least
you will now no longer remember
your name; its absence is covered under a mound of salt.

But I will come to you and
lift you, carry you and give back
your name because it never belonged
to me. I will softly tell you, to hell
with immortality and to hell with
transcendence & humility – you need your name
because it is the only way I can
call out to you and say I need someone to carry me too.

I wrote Mozart's Requiem

Some people have told me on various occasions
Mozart was God. I don't believe them. The
woman who seizes me from my shoulders
and says let us jump over the cliff into the
ocean below, we are taller than the
depth of the deepest sin, she is God.
She is God because when I touch her
arms traveling over her skin like
smoke kissing a green glass table
there is no reflection of me in her
eyes. I speak to her and all she does
is laugh slightly whispering to my
mouth, heaven and hell mean nothing
to you and me. And in the night when
she undresses me piece by piece
she will write with her nails on
the plaster wall we are free, we will
unchain our own dreams, she is God.
I don't even know her and yet I will
lose all my remaining lies to her, left
naked and free, ready to jump over
the cliff, without even saying goodbye,
thank you for releasing me; my hands
will not be smelling of her.
Everything will be silent.
I will look outside and break
the window just so that I feel some pain.
Then to the whole damn observing world
I will scream,
I have been fucked by God.

Screaming out love for you on the day I also got my tattoo

Love is blindness
-U2
And you give yourself away
-U2

I grabbed a piece of the
black sky and said you are
mine, you are mine and no
one elses. Arms outstretched
with my voice hoarse from
declaring my love and anger
at the world, I jumped over
the cliff. On my way down
I gave myself to life
without asking why,
without lying on a bed of
thorns. This is love I
sang, love is blindness
my brothers & sisters and
I have leapt into hell
for it. This hell, this love,
slaps me, paints
neither poets nor poetry is dead
on my chest,
licks my vocal chords
with honey on the
edge of its tongue. This
love is mine,
this bareness of a clear view,
this overflowing insanity
of rebirth, it is killing
me and I am happy
for it is a honest death.
I can see the ground
come up, calling out to me
I will carry you
and I surrender to it,
I surrender all the disappointment,
all the hurt, all the blood on my knees,
waiting to be carried,
to have the weight lifted
off my feet for once.

Wrapped around me are
51,000 people, music that
has given birth to the
present, breath of wild
passion, touch of needed
emotion, voices which are
declaring I will survive till
the end of the world in
flesh and name. This jump,
this fall, this love is blindness,
is free, is my sacrifice ...
for everyone and no one.
I am about to hit the
ground, to arrive in a land
where I will be buried. The
final destination and I am
seeing it. I know it is love,
I am blind and finally I am
about to be reborn
to a world in search of me.

Joanne

Her hair will fall over her eyes
as she gently tucks it behind her
ears while you are gazing into
the (her) future, a madman who
wants to fall in love desperately.
Even though you are in need for
that love which will make you
shoulder the world and drag the
cymbal crashes of voices, you know
Joanne will want patience from
you. She will want to know you
better when you have seen her
birth and visited her grave in
your head. You know you
love her because you want her eyes
to reflect kindness and her lips to kiss
blessings to people you will never
know. Her nose, her cheeks, her
eyebrows, all of that you want to
touch and have and write for the
sake of your future wife, what it
really means to love a woman. You
will nail all your obsessions onto
the moon on the night when the
clouds make the sky look like a
sandy beach at low tide, and say
to yourself to hell with making love,
I just want to love and be loved by
Joanne. It reminds you of your
childhood and the crush you had
on a woman who just might
remember you over a dinner of
lost memories. The innocence
of the faith in that things are good,
flows back, you decide you are
a human god after all, and living
is a matter of simply existing with
courage, dignity and honesty – for now
you are under a pear tree in a small
orchard of a village on the mountainside,
and you love this woman, whose
name Joanne rings in your ears
after so many days.
You want Joanne to rescue you from the lies,
from the howls of doubt that bite your heels
till they bleed onto the ground through your
shoes. You would like her to embrace
and tell you she loves you and she will one
day ask you to rescue her. Without conceit,
or lust, I dream of running my hands
through her hair and dance with her
as a soft ballad groans and grates over
the radio; I will believe in love and see
for the first time how I am doomed to live
in hell, that in my freedom lies the
weight of so many nameless chains.

For the glory of my life which
contains so many of my shames,
I will ask Joanne to forgive me
and in return will breathe forgiveness
to the world, all in silence and humility
as my skin scrapes against the barbed
wire of hate, the thorns of my
curious soul. Maybe I will
break down, fall to my knees and
cry with my head in my hands,
my head in my hands instead of
a prayer; so close to falling into
the ravine of secrets and getting
lost forever. Even if all my dark shadows
darkened the horizon, I will hold
Joanne by her hand and say I am
not scared of living.

I want to scream love at Joanne.
To hold her and walk on water when
she is writing the stories of lovers to come
on the skies, when she is blowing the
destiny of love to give rise to waves of
hope – this is what I want. I want
you Joanne, just like heaven wants
hell, with the faint touch of death,
the soft hiss of desire and firm hold
of believing in the world.
Without slowing to a standstill, without
dispersion, in this silent mood of
loss and love, I am sinking into your
eyes without realization or regret.

Joanne, I am approaching rest.
In this lap of love, the rain of
doubt wets my skin, there is
no certainty and at the back of
my head I see myself failing,
whirling away from the arms that
can hold me away from all rescue
and resurrection. I have screamed my love
for my selfish self, for the greedy world
and for a woman.
I am approaching rest,
approaching love,
you
and maybe hope.

27th of August, 1992

I am now free.
I licked your skin with words and
dove into the death of solitude while kissing
your shoulders. The salt of the sea that
washed my wounds gave birth to my
freedom, the destruction of the cage
that had blood and thorns on the bars and
the names of people on its floor. All
my cries for help were answered, were
rejected, until the wind slit my head
ear to ear with love and lust. The knife
with which I cut you open did not have
woman written on it, there was only
the fragrance of mangoes and watermelons
which had arrived a long time ago from
a village where people did not know time.
Our laughter was born because we became
ready to die as children in the
shell of our wisdom, with the words
in our head proclaiming
we do not belong to anybody but everybody
belongs to us. I wrote my name in
ink on my father's face praying
he was seeing me naked and scared;
and I could hear my mother smile.
Wetted by your tongue, killed by your
eyes, I have fallen into the well of
freedom, where the walls are slippery
and the water is cold. I can feel the
bones in my body scrape in agony,
forcing them to touch the asphalt
as I crawl on the road to freedom.
There is a crashing of drums in my thighs,
the roar of the gentle stream on my
chest, the world is getting ready to
be swallowed by me. I am outgrowing
this world on which I can no longer
stand – I am finally getting there
to be free. But there is here and
here is somewhere, there is this
circle of fire and round stones in front
of me, a monument to my life and
that of the stars, the acid sting of
my dreams when I am awake –
this is freedom without smell or sight.
No hope for rescue, no hope for rest, in
the insanity that I chose for myself,
I am making love to you with the
subtleness of a wild horse, at this moment
when my life is collapsing beyond the
perimeter of God's house, I am making
love to you as the angels watch
and the devil says I wish I was there.

I am now free.
All my desires are washed away
and I am ebbing away into a
black night where I am not
sure of anything. The years are
passing by me, the sun is heating
the death inside me and wings
are sprouting on my back. These
huge wings with white feathers,
look at me and be jealous.
Muscles on my spine are stretched,
my neck is stiff like the idea of
glory in my head, my arms are
tearing into flesh and blood,
the rib cage is heaving,
legs are starting to run
the ground is starting to leave me
I can't hear any voices
I have left her behind
this is love
I just had sex
I am away
I am now free.

Flames from a sun at night

There is a pull on my leg, a tugging
at my ankle and from behind hands slip
a mask over my face. I see azure
water and I am swimming into the waves.
The sun is tickling my back and its lips
are touching my neck. I can taste the salt
with the edge of my tongue,
slipping and sliding into the warmth
of the water, the skin of her body.
I want to hear her speak but
all my ears pick up are the
soft mutterings of the other women;
and they are not wearing masks.
I know I am alone, I am wet and
disoriented – where there is no shore
or sand or sky, that is a prelude
to paradise. I run, get tired. She
catches up with me, enfolds me in
her arms and I faint.
The last thing I hear before
the blackness licks me is her saying
love is not a dream.

This is love

I am gathering of raindrops of yesteryears
holding them tight in my hand
till my finger hurt
this is love
faces asking me if I saw
them in my dream last night
in that black night where
I woke up without
a scream without a tear
but with aching ribs
this is love
all my curses echoing far
into my ears, I can't sing
anymore, I can't rescue you
so you leave
& I curse you
but I want you back
the body to hold
that shaded blue eye
to paste on my forehead
this is love
jesus, I can't think straight
I am diving into the world
when I know nobody will
see the ripples
the water of the world
will not love me back
but I will drown in all
the colors of creation
glory or suicide it matters
and I choose one kiss
three words, lovely smile,
I am seeing my mother get old
and I am not scared
this is love
there is smoke over the bed,
my hair is sticking with hate
the release beyond the door
is not coming
my hands are breaking into
flowers as the wall becomes
my shadow, a heavy shadow;
Samir, Usama, Hasan, where
are you? karachi grammar school
bites my heels, st. john's university
becomes an ulcer in my gut
and I will go on
I will create
sever me from the neck
I will talk
I will write
savannas of the future I see
ruins of the past are by me
the present is coming to be
mine, I throw it to you
this is love

ooff, I am stretched
between surrender and uncertainty
this rope has taken everything
away from me
I refuse to be a victim
no surrender
how long will I sing this song?
baby, don't let me fall
mother, cradle my head when
I sleep for you
Irem, go beyond the death
of my father,
father, can you see me?
this is love
it is age, my youth
cross and crescent are
forged into my spine
heave ribs, heave
breathe in the world
and live it for your sake
hold the sword in one hand
don't forget the pencil
there will be a time
for peace and war
for the white & blackness
I am the gray
the silence under the bullets
help me I am hungry
help me I am crying
in front of strangers
even the t.v.
I am wide awake
there are no more mountains
to climb, no more
promises to break
I am dry
I am screaming for you
COME HERE
LET US SAVE OURSELVES
this is love
LET US SAVE EACH OTHER
this is not melodrama
this is love

Saltwater and forgiveness

lost and bewildered
there is strength in
my weakness
talk softly
I am licking the coating
of lust and greed and lies
of your alphabets
look at me gently
while I poke revenge
into them
hold my hand
is the blood warm enough
for you who wants
an answer that
I have given
the secret is mine
drink with me it might
ease your sorrow
kiss me on my cheek
while I whisper into your
ear, I forgive you
yes, I am God
ask Pushkin and he'll
confirm it
I forgive you
as I die in my hate
in misery
but I am not sad
bring on the cameras
I am here to stay
ghost and flesh
with thorns and balm
you are free
forget me
can this be humility?
yeah, but remember
I forgive you

within certain limits

Dive

It is morning and time
to dive out from the window
onto the lap of people
this is the final sacrifice
of my life; for the sake
of my ego don't tell me
how great and wonderful
I am – let me continue
to scrap my knees
build the cathedral of love
shout out when will you
ask if I am Jesus
be stoned by your ignorance
touch the neck of the devil
kiss the walls of the room
I have dug my grave in
cry over the destruction
of my innocent eyes
break your heart for
my sake and yours
dissolve into the nation
that I am
blow over the desert in
search of comfort forever
I know what I want
I want to dive a perfect 10
and cut the water of life
into a million drops
it is morning & time for no rules

I will become mortal

For the sake of love I smiled
I bit my lips to forget
all the vain promises
swirling inside my head
give me time, give me time
and I will love all my desperations
for you, destroy all possession
of you – I will become mortal
in the name of love and you
under a rain of your eyes
over a glance of your sighs
beyond the horizon of your secrets
there is a call for rest
of muscle of arms and of thighs
I will become mortal
all for love
nothing left to chance
damn this responsibility
somebody relieve me
for standing alone

across the river an old woman stopped me
she said, "Kerem, let the red fire kiss
the blue water when you walk tomorrow."
for the sake of love?
this is getting dangerous
such is the knife edge of mortality
I will become mortal
for love and you

End of good deaths

This must be a good death, to
die at the hands of love. I
have put fear on the table,
where the plates await the
world to eat on hate and greed.
If I had any protest, then
it is gone, sent away to the other
end of hell. But the agony
remains, that gut-wrenching
hurt of separation from the
womb, from the hands that
smear my arms with blue blood,
this agony for love of a world
who is bent backwards to
forget me, this agony of mine
and I accept it. Illegitimate child
of mine, love equals death and
all the esoteric rubbish, does not enter
my ears anymore. I have
surrendered, am not in the
chase anymore to conquer or
be conquered – no wonder this
is a good death.

Water

for Mary

I am coming down on the waterfalls
of rules, getting wet under the water
of anarchy, the clear liquid of love. This
must be the hunger for the clearing of the mist
which resides at the soles of our
feet. This is my rebirth where I
no longer am afraid to see my mother
die, nor to hold her, the younger woman, in my arms and
wonder, how many times will I kiss
the skin covering me like
water without creating ripples. It is in this
water I can't breathe, looking outside
from the glass which holds me, but
I can't see the transparent covering of
our souls, so when will I spill over
into her eyes? Both the women are
the same, and I am mortal for both
of them. Peeling the garment of weariness
and forcing me to forgive and walk
without regrets, my mother and she
have imprisoned me within the
blood of my children. My mother will
give her my wrinkles to Mary and say
my son is old, and needs
unrequited love. Mary will give
my mother a reason to smile. And
all this while I put my wings away
and sing anthems for my freedom from
the chains of love, the water. Neither of them
will hear me; in that lies the promise
of comfort and the guarantee of war
with the next woman I will have no
choice but to love and drink from.

Love is death

It must be a good death to die of love.
With holes all over your body
through which the breath of all
your enemies, and those insufferable
idiots blow, there would be feeling
of relief, the hand of my mother
stroking my forehead, kissing me
slightly and saying it is alright
to die of love. What else is there
to say when I know I will die
after my time is up, wasted into
the black ashes, croaking continuously
my spirit is coming back to
this world, and evil be damned.
Perhaps, all that I am thinking
at the moment is a sickness,
this sickness of being forced to
bend at the knees and cry
without reason, whispering
God, don't let go of my hand.
It is all in the hands my friend,
whether it is a good death, or
an end of life, mine, that ate itself
up because of love, it is in the hands
memories and regrets will scream for
the blood, for the freedom of
our fears.

R.E.M.

I am living a dream.
I can see the secrets
which are lying at the
pit of every ones stomach.
People are shooting real
bullets at children and
I am seeing the disbelief,
the sense of being lost,
all lost in an inferno
that belongs to someone else.
This is a dream: in front of
me she is standing there
telling me I can not do anything
to save her. Love is
a dream and I hate it
for playing with me. Handcuffed
to the earth, I am dreaming

the fall of all the angels, blackening
the sky like a swarm of
fainting flies. And Beelzebub
is not happy. This dream,
this montage of my other life
brushes my eyelids. Passages
through corridors of wars which
blow us apart at the joints.
We are all prisoners of
the same war.
And that is not

a dream; a nude woman
beckoning me toward
a window with half open
shades where voices of
men are breaking apart
into tears saying what
can I say, what can I say,
we are going to be saved.

This dream, this soon to be forgotten
mosquito bite on my brain, there is a
lingering taste of destruction
and death; a charred smell of
love, this blackness thick like
a soup brewed under a cloudy moon.
Fresh air does not come so I will
wait, this dream in hand and
mind, living a life which refuses
to sink inside me. The woman
is beckoning, secrets are
scratching for blood on my skin

and I am starting to see the
tail of love. And yet, yet, there are these
voices saying we are going to be saved,
we are going to be saved.

God, I must be dreaming.

Malcolm

I want to write a song for this man,
Malcolm X, this Afro-American
prince, this man whose beard scratches
my shoulders, whose lips whisper in
my ear. But I can't write. His initials
are blazed and razed and imprinted
into the lining of my skull, on the bones
of my ribcage, and I can't write
a song for him. I will not write
even as he takes a sword and tells me
shaking his head and holding me
by the wrists, "Kerem, we have
to fight for the equality of our brothers
and sisters." Yes, Malcolm, my
feet have dissolved into the earth,
my anger has parched the words in
my mouth, I am shivering and I
am yelling dammit enough is
enough, stop the raping, the killing,
the murder of our souls. And I
shivering. I can no longer
write a song for Malcolm,
because I am black, I am
Afro-American, and I want to
sing enough is enough, I demand
equality without a tune or
rhyme or melody – I just want
to sing. This is all I can give
Malcolm, this is all they
will allow me to give, this is
all I am willing to give and
that is why without song,
I will die a death of smiles like you
across the savannas of love.

I will get your freedom,
I will snatch our freedom,
I will scratch what is left
of our freedom,
Malcolm, one day
you and I will be free –
but I am scared
of dying like you,
my soul splattered on
the floors of confusion across the desires that you and I call love.

Suitcase

We are all travelers
on the shores of the
river that ends before
the pit of our graves,
before our last offering
of unselfish love.

Our shoulders will ache
as the sun bears down
on us, like missionaries
of a lost religion we will
have to stop for a drink
of conversation, doubt and
hate of living.

On that shore of the river
mosquitoes will remind us
the irritation of being
with people you don't know
but love to travel with.
We will forget our shame,
deny our cries for help and
tell the soles of our feet
that end is near,
the end is near.

Battleground

I want to touch that person.
That person. As if memories
were like paper boats, I want
to sink into her, and take her
down with me till together we hit
the plastic bottom of the bucket.
Everything would look so different
from down there – everything waving
like stupid arms detached from
bodies. We will blow bubbles and
see them float beyond us not
seeing them pop in hurried shyness.
If she shivers I will churn the water
to create heat. It will take a long
time but I would do it for her.

I sank alone. She was a better
swimmer than I expected. But does
it really matter? There is no shore
left for us. Here I sit at the
bottom of the bucket, my boat
once more pulp, looking at those
legs gently guide her around a
sea so small for comfort. But
they will start to thrash soon.
I will no help her sink or stay afloat.
Not because I can't but because
I won't. For the first time in my life
I am deaf to the voices in my head.

Barefoot

they will not listen to you
conversations creep about you
like pestilent vine
dithering and babbling pass
you by like trains that
have no destination
people look and laugh
as if you are too sane for
their taste
and you say let them be
to yourself
but how it hurts
how it hurts
like knives unsheathed
those words slash open
the wombs of treachery
of misunderstanding
of not listening
and how it hurts
dear executioner do you
know what you have done
arrogant! loud! egoist!
they slap you, slap you
till they rob you of your
dignity, of your truth
leave you naked
angry and wise
no revenge, no revenge
will take place
my glory will come later
when they will be looking
at their feet become concrete,
then dust, then nothing
not a trace of blood
while I will be covered in red
my face sheathed in peace
my eyes closed with the
weight of absurdity
they shout again, and again
all those things that
are not true
let them shout because
I know that the waves
of absurdity will fill their
throats and lungs and guts
with the salt of insanity
the fishes of quiet death
then for the heavens of
silence, for the hells of noise
I will scream
I will scream
no request for permission
with the voices of all the
screamers
in daylight, twilight and
sunlight our patience

will float like the hands
of our childhood
the feet of our old age
oh! they will float
and we will be free
I will be free
will leave all that blood
behind all that darkness
behind
standing on the street
no longer red
no longer misunderstood
we are the barefoot
prophets, your future
the destiny of so many
deaths and births

don't listen to us
be barefoot
be a prophet
with no beginning
and no end

Radio

You think you are the voice. You live
under the impression that you are a voice.
Under the waterfall of guilt you believe you
have a voice. Like a fiddler without a fiddle,
you and I both stamp our feet in time, in step,
in echoes of dance and music, but we know what
is missing. We sing words that could destroy worlds
only to see our satisfaction end at the limits of
the legends that we create. Even legends after all
that we find true, are false. Our voice is false too. Neither
a conduit for the musings of lazy street urchins
nor a side canal for the breathless seductions of lovers
we long for, our voices explode with a silenced *bampf*
as soon as it tries to travel on foot. The inadequacy of the
language slits our vocal cords and all we can do is to
open our eyes and gape, statues of flesh as the world
screams back at us. Like murderers we escape the
torture only to realize that what we left behind was the
only thing which sustained us.

So, we spell out chaos and equality with nails on the
footpath but it really does not matter. Our voices
are gone. The emptiness of knowing you will never
say anything scoops the air out of our lungs and
leaves us waiting for attention. And while waiting

I look at you and see that our
mutual silence is the water of
our loss. I can't hold you anymore,
I can't expect these arms to take the place of voice.
You are evaporating & I can't reverberate anymore.
Before I start to cry out in a vacuum
of sound, kill me gently
and when people ask you why you
did it, indicate to them
that a voice told you to do so.

Over the river, under the bridge

My mother wrote to me that we have to
sell the house. She wants my advice. The son
has to come up with advice
or at least imagine that he can give it.
So I thought and imagined and all I
can write to my mother is
sell it, times are hard and we have no choice.
With that, a bunch of dirty walls
and tiles darker than my sins
will go to a family that will
in no way resemble mine.
The *Playboys* will have to come
out from under the mattress, the dust
on my Class V notebooks will
disappear and the view from the
balcony overlooking the sewer will
not be mine. The window I spent
more time looking out then studying
will have to open and close in my head.
Everything will be crammed into my head.
Those days of cricket will be compressed
like shirts in a small suitcase.
A whole damn house that I spent
twelve years into my head. My friends
that never came because they were scared
of my father will have to enter my head too
for good Turkish tea and light conversation. I am no god.

In my head I am close to being homeless. The new
place is not my home,
I am too much of an adult to start
all over again. This is life, one has to
keep moving, grab the resting place in the
early thirties. Then I will start all over
again. Build a personal Ottoman empire.
Till then my head is going to be
crowded like a Karachi railway station,
lot of walking around
very little done.
Sell the house mother,
sell it for all our sakes.

Rust

He said he would like to walk
with his muddy shoes
on the altar
of my being
– and I can't say no
to him. It is not
a matter of strength
but a matter, a real
matter, of
rust. That dark, reddish
brown stuff that
cakes on your skin
and crackles
in your eyes; rust.
Perhaps it is the
sand of the
desert, that desert
of his, or maybe
the salt of
white bed-sheet like
lake beds; it could
be my mother's secrets
or a longing for
some love. Whatever
it is, I am slowing
down, bit by bit
clotting away
and I don't know why.
But he still wants
to walk on me. Go
ahead, walk on me
like a thumb
that was trying to pick
up dry crumbs of bread.
I will stick to
you – something
of me will stick
to you; like the way
my father says
son I miss you
and all I can do
is try to be a man.
All that pretentiousness,
the didactic, impersonal
words (it is all in the
words), he wants to
tear down and
walk on. Such
hateful sneering.
That's the way
rust is
when you want
to remove it.
It could be
that I am a false prophet
of false revelations,

it could be all
those books I read.
But people have died
in my arms
and many without
my arms.
Rust is a slow
death that starts
in the arms;
so I will pick
you up,
carry you until
they break,
all in love,
sadness, desire
for a touch.
Walk on me and
wipe your muddy
soles all over me;
rust and mud
crunching together.
A new sound, an
old color.
In your laugh of
victory don't
open your mouth
too wide; your
hinges are rusty.
If your jaw breaks away
look at the bottom
of your feet
and wonder
the fate
of the rusty man
whom you
believed was
iron.

The rebel and his silhouette

For Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Faiz would say to me,
dear son dance without
the music, but instead to the blowing
cries in the wind that were born
in the night of swirling
blood and dust.

Shoulders slouching on a
weatherbeaten sofa, he would
put his hand on my head and tell
me how the hungry want a voice,
the dead want a life,
and oppression needs a song; all
this on my head because I am
son of the land, the father
of the future, an angel
of the past. And I believe
Faiz, believe him as my God
who smiled without reason.

He would then listen at the window
for the slogans and the curses and
whisper to me, dear son the time to
make a choice is near, so why
don't you listen to the slogans and
curses in your heart? And I would
listen and listen to the tumult
with Faiz behind me muttering
dear son this is also your silence.

How could I not agree? My shoes
are worn, my clothes tattered, this hand
in bandages, the other quiet like
Faiz's tortures. We are both of
the same clan, both having the
same cobbler, tailor and doctor. But
my teeth are in place while he lost
his on his way over here, here where
there is isn't anything
else to think about.

A whole day would pass as
if ghosts were running away
wild, carrying the day behind
them. Faiz would look at
the street with the one bulb
strung on the cables and
would calmly say to me,
Kerem, my son look how
we are running carrying the day
behind us into the night, do
you hear the clamor?
Faiz was just hearing too many things; all
I could see was us both
running with blood on our hands
and dust on our feet.

But somewhere, nearby, beyond the wall,
in the night where we were each
others shadows
we could both hear an old man and a young apprentice
on an old accordion sing
our favorite ghazal.

The exercise

To drip into the silence
 of the insides,
what I would give
 to peer later into my insides
and see if there was
 a puddle or a pond.

To drip over the curvature
 of the eyes,
what I would give
 to slide over the edge
and see if I could
 gain insight or lose my sight.

To drip onto the pages
 of my hands,
what I would give
 to read the books back to front
and see if I came
 to where I am or to where I am going.

It rained today

It rained today. Like an old man
falling through the years, wanting
to talk to me. Slowly, gently, the drops
scattered into elastic worlds, collected into
disturbed puddles to splash in, argued with
the windows and walls – on and on
with the persistence of a woman who is
about to smile.

It rained today. Like the future that
gifted the ground and the sky with a present,
the past nudging into rivulets of love
and desire... the time of rainfall measured
by the cold, supple air that drifts
under the nose, over the eyes, resting
on the cheeks – on and on as an
ocean wondering where it is going.

It rained today. Like a conversation
that meant something, something, after
it was over. The speech of anger and
understanding of anger as the ghosts
of ourselves turn heads in subtle courage
to nod for our helplessness, or fear – on and on
like an intimation of insanity when we shout for the hell of it.

Deliverance

I kissed her at 5:30 in the morning
when it was a day short of a full moon,
a lifetime overdue with fear.
She held me in her calloused hands and
said I was an angel, which I believed
holding her hair not knowing what to do with it.
The lines under her eyes did not disappear
under my lips, our eyes never met
but our kiss was our truth. There was
that fear of absence but neither our lips
nor our hands cared. We didn't burn
into ashes or gulp air in ecstasy, only
kissing as man and woman without
pretense, without glory, together
with illusions of becoming wise mystics.
On a bed that was a little untidy, four
months of conversation rained on us
as pelting desire for acceptance.
I didn't want to run or grasp on to her
for love till my knuckles went white, so
I put aside my application for martyrdom
and I said to her in a whisper,
"I wouldn't mind dying like this."
Touching my face she replied,
"I know what you mean,"
and kissed me again on my wondering lips.

From Malawi with love

for James Chihak

On the 13th of November Jimbo finally wrote.

Kerem, I am silent. Your letter
found me in deep migraine.
My anger hurts me, Kerem, do you understand?
I met this man named Africa
(or woman, or whatever)
and he was very sick. Sick & naked,
bleeding from open sores,
trying to dance with his ancestors' drum beat,
but it can't, it can't.
Blind, deaf, dumb, he sits there
on plains where grass was once
trampled with pride by lions.

"Jimbo, I am here now. Rest
your head on my shoulder.
Rest, and I will listen."

White people give him kicks
into his belly and ribs,
spitting handouts on him. All he can do
it to put them in a bag around his neck,
until that too will roll off
because of a sharp hatchet.
The bag will soak the redness
until the yellow sun delivers
itself away onto the savannah.
Bleeding, sick and uneducated,
Africa is dying before my eyes,
the blackness of the black nations
suffocating on manacled throats
in black coal mines
where funerals outnumber births.

" I know Jimbo, I know.
You and I need to have a long chat
under a black night,
under a couple of black stars."

Think! dammit. Use your
fuckin' brain! Goddamn
I'm pissed at everyone for being so blind.
I just want to scream some days.

" Scream now and I will hear
you Jimbo, scream, my man, scream.
Scream everyday till they cut your tongue off."

I'm becoming an useless blob,
like a festering hot angry blister.
The world is fucking itself,
you know that. So what to do?
To hell with spiritual and emotional
development. To hell with it all.
Endurance, maybe I need endurance.
Will I ever learn?

"Look at the sky Jimbo, and
wonder if it ever thinks of falling."

By the end of the day,
I am too tired to look, to read.
Sartre's "Road to Freedom",
some Dostoevsky, Hesse, Levinas,
they all swim around my brain cells.
Ack, let them swim.

I don't know what the hell to do with my life.
I have no ambition, no awareness of destiny,
just anger at a toilet that can't flush.
The world is a toilet and I can't
even be its toilet paper...
I am close to losing my humor,
God! even my humor.
I know what I know,
I see what I see,
as they say in Chiyao, "yoyo nanga titani."

"I can see you with your bandana Jimbo,
wet with sweat,
your forehead dark like the
blackboard you teach biology on.
Will you meet me halfway over the Atlantic?"

I stand impotently as my dick,
uttering unheard cries of contestation –
so what's for supper?
will the rains come early this year?
the corn's been growin' all the way to hell!
old woman Johnson slipped on
the ice and broke her hip
Bob and Sue are getting a divorce
Phil's girl is pregnant
and he hasn't finished college yet
the Ford's got a problem with the timing
how's Billy's cold?
sure is a bad year for the flu
how are Jim & Sarah's kids doing –
the sentences club me till I
vomit hate from my belly.

"Next time vomit near the lone tree
on the banks of the waterhole
and breathe in the hate of others.
But be careful, somehow love
was pissed around the dirty bushes. "

Luiz A. Moreira is a distant memory.
I heard he's back in Brazil.
May he have a good life,
he deserves it,
the brown little Brazilian anarchist shit.

"After we meet over the Atlantic,
we will got to Brazil too."

And you ended up in some college
in snooty New England. The smelly
armpit of America sprayed with expensive cologne.
Kerem! how could you!

"I will take you to New England too."

I really dislike New Englanders,
even more than boorish Turks.
Don't become like them,
or I will kill you.
I am serious.
"Kill me for the right reason.
I am serious.
Poets dream to die in the hands of fire."

I am also thinking of changing
my name to Joe Shmoe.

"You can run, but you can't hide Jimbo."

God I hate it.
I hate money, private property,
politics, conventional development,
dirty underwear on my pillow.
I hate it when I run out of toilet paper.
I hate lists of things I hate,
the people who read list of things I hate
and think it is funny,
or the people who read my lists
and don't think it is funny.

I hate people.
I hate myself.
I hate hatred.

"You forgot to hate
laughter and tears Jimbo.
Then all is not lost."

Am I being vulgar Kerem?
Well, fucking excuse moi!!
Am I being vulgar Kerem?

"No, Jimbo, no...
yes Jimbo, you are."

I have had it with this fucking planet.
As Lou Reed put it,
"Well I know one thing that certainly is true,
this place is a zoo
and the keeper ain't you
and I'm sick of it,
and I'm sick of you,
bye, bye, bye." God I love that song.

I love poor people who spit on rich people
and get kicked in the teeth.
I love anarchists who flick off suits,
the prophet with loud obnoxious
personalities that piss people off,
when the important are given the
shaft of justice and writhe in the light of truth,
I love it when the dog bites the
paternalistic hand that feeds it
and tells the dickhead to get to hell.
I love cold water on a cold day
getting malaria when I'm pissed of at the world
taking a shit
eating ripe mangoes
writing this letter to you
being mooshy, laughed at
and being called an asshole
the idea of telling my kids
"kids, Uncle Kerem and I are really crazy dumbfucks"
I love the idea of pissing off the world
going down in abject martyrdom
I love it all.

"Let me walk alone for a while Jimbo.
Then we will shout together
in our love and hatred
how we won't make good martyrs."

Peace and love.

Within the fire of Eden

You don't want her to leave.
The speech of a man asking
for a verification of his attention
stops in mid sentence in his mind
and she wonders why he is
smiling without a particular reason.
Hardly an hour of companionship
that borders on a subtle hint
of shouting for a helping hand
and all is already lost –
she says she is comfortable
with contradictions and
you reply, " I am trying
to understand them."

But the eyes latch once in
a while, like two runners
on a track gasping for breath
as they try to switch batons
again and again and again.
You play with a strand of hair
that has designated its own destiny
and she gazes past you
past your future
making you wonder why.
The cool New England air full
of quarreling dews settle
on your jacket,
she doesn't mind
(not at first)
and you say to yourself
"handshake or a kiss on the cheek?"

She mentions that you should
go to the Grand Canyon
and hike to the bottom and then
back up in a day. To look
at the sky from the worlds largest
pit is wonderful, she says truthfully.
You can only say yes,
and in that enthusiastic yes
you are burning in the impossibility
of not having actually not
fallen in love with her till now.

Questions end, answers end,
and you wish you had talked
more about yourself for her benefit,
while she thinks that
you are an average listener.
No battle lines, no demarcations
of conqueror or conquest,
the relief of being comfortable
settles in, and invades doubts.
And you think this is the
onset of wisdom –
she is glad, glad to be a woman.

The elevator does not help.
A quick ride, and the building
is already smaller, more bearable.
An exchange of pleasantries,
wishes of perhaps friendship
that would be more than a
supermarket acquaintance.
And a handshake
with words that actually mean something.

Yet she leaves, and you don't want her to.

Vanishing presence

What would it be like to go over the edge?
A slow quiet jump without feet dragging,
eyes trying to smile, it would be the closest
I could ever get to divination. Darkness hissing
across my face, slithering through my hair,
in all probability I will try to laugh
out of fear and because I really would
want to. Leaving behind no notes, no
smell of dreams whatsoever, I would not
even look back. Let the past accompany
me its wails, as my hands clutch
the linings of my trouser pockets. All
that I have lost – my father, the
security of definition, ability to love
without demand – all and nothing
that will stay as permanent sweat on
a dry chair. Rid me of this tiredness,
this accursed solitude and I will grant
you my place before the eternal door.

I have never talked to a survivor. Survivors
never make good talkers. The imminent
failure of speech comes as my muscles
blink, will I survive? If all the
people were to gather and listen to
me, there is nothing I would say.
With tears the proclamation of hypocrisy
will rebound off walls, echoes and echoes
of truth beating me, beating me
to the floor. Such is the failure of speech.
All that trying in vain. Like getting gagged
and slapped, I can no longer retaliate,
my anger and passion settling like silt
on a riverbed without a name.

In knowing that, I know there is wisdom.
God is still a child, he knows I know
that too. But perhaps in our silence
we are learning what patience is.
The day when I burst like a supernova,
bits & pieces of me will land on trees,
on dry grass, on the rooftops of
Lyari and Orangi Town, under the feet
of the Bosphorus, all that patience
and anger & passion & rebellion.
There will be ten million new skies.

Vanishing presence. Two words unacknowledged
as eyebrows and eyelashes.
I will vanish, you will live,
and my presence will walk
until dawn. Then it too will open
the door and I will be no more.
However it will be open.
The door will always be open.

Out of ammunition and still going strong

The walls marked in a
splattering of hate, holes
that hold capsules of
time for the dead who
wish their children
would go on killing
and dying in their name.
What name? The plaster
cracked like the wood stock
of the old rifles, bricks
breaking into tiny rivulets
of sand as the old woman
with rivulets of wonder on her face
cries and cries into
the night that is
night no longer.

Empty roads, empty eyes
with hands that
still want to go on
leaving behind the folk
music that is frozen
on the lips that sip
the bland smell
of dry death, dry gunpowder,
the approaching dryness
of more war.

The noises that destroy
all the philosophies of space
cut through sleep
(what sleep?)
like the scream of green grass
as it becomes red.
And the children look
on, grabbing a rotten
pear, trying to kick
the ball around the
damn stones & rocks,
asking do they really
have to go to school.

The end will never come.
Bullets are made of metal
which lasts longer than
flesh, or love, or dreams.
Spitting the last remnants
of our voices, we will
end our shame and our
reason and the wall
that will try to stand,
leaving only the old
woman to cry
and cradle the head
of a dead soldier.

Heretics of motion

I am thinking of the car ad which
has me sitting inside going eighty miles
an hour, through lush green woods. 190
horses under the hood. I blur within
the kiss of the trees. My hair, my hours
are flying away from me, and the windows
are closed. There is no doubt I will
blur through. And not a trace is going
to be left on the leave disturbed paths.
I am whizzing by and I am not leaving
anything behind. But I know where
I am going,

towards the wall that has not
shown me my place in the world,

the wall that guards me from the sea,

190 horses are under me and I am going
to crash through the wall, my mouth
open to swallow the salt of living;

into the sea, with all the neighing
and shouting, I will not drown

but go on, and on, and on, till
like a heretic of motion
my liberation is clenched by my teeth.

Mist

I am not sure of the word mist.
Sometimes it implies and defines the future
and covers up the past
confusing the present
so like a wounded motorist
I crash into the ditch to be liberated
awaiting arrival to the door of
heaven or hell, both which are in the clouds.
Or does mist(y) mean that
my eyes have started to drizzle
upon a world that is parched
of rain as the seedless furrows of
the peasant fields and society minds lose themselves
in the twirling dust? Maybe the mist could mean
that we missed an object,
alive or inanimate
with our careless tongues and pointing fingers.
It could be that mist
deserves to be such an ambiguous word
for an amorphous bunch of beings
who give the meaning to the word
just so that they can live with it.

For the people such as myself,
who are the bastards that suckle on the
breasts of prostitutes
for a moment of satisfactory
conclusion to a life of television events
mist is a horde of mosquitoes
that covers the horizon
and the blue depths of the sky.

We can go on and on
like a railroad track
that is so sunken between the
mounds of wet mist
that you can not see the pebbles that
hide in the corners of rusted steel.
Mist, sad but true has only one meaning,
a meaning that I had to create for
you and your children.
Mist means the hazy sunlight
that is only present when we are born.
If you are bewildered it is okay
but you are not blind. Don't you see
that mist is the root word for mystic?

Broken nights

If the birds had to fly
they would have,
if the stars had to speak
they would have,
if the wind had to kill
it would have,
if the spirits had to scream
they would have,
if the poets had to die
they would have,
if the words had to crumble,
they would have.

But instead the night broke.

And then shards of forgotten warriors
spread themselves over the helpless ones
like misty dreams that had once
lived within the children
that desired a forest, a dragon
and a couple of heroes.

The sky emptied itself of reason
as a tired old man,
an old man, an old sky
that is bereft of even a cup of tea
or a page of a torn book.

And whoever controls our destiny
held up the guilty hammer
and introduced us to a new horror,
a new meaninglessness.
I couldn't even take my clothes off,
so that I could die the way
I was born
because my clothes were hammered
with nails to my skin,
my new prison,
my new death.

On lookers pleaded, shouted at me
to seize the day,
with all their futility
and all I could say
my sons and daughters, please,
forgive me, forgive me.

Neither they, nor the hammer
forgave me.
I am still waiting.

War and peace

A stillness and quietness settles in,
there are no longer memories that frisk about
the trunks of apricot trees,
no loved one to hold and tell them
stories of indigestion and failed
elevator trips about the meaning of life
without any grasp on thoughts and ideas
about justice, poverty, freedom and death,
like being numb after the fear
of paralysis due to a tear;
a silence of the absence of reason and emotion,
everybody's eyes and ears reposed like that of a leopard
under the protection of her spirit ancestors.
I could not hear the grandfathers
give advice to me
nor could tell folk tales of Ali the Rebel
and Hasan Aga the cruel landlord
because even Gulden the flower girl
had vanished into my frustrations
and miserable desperations.

Calm and tranquil now,
me and my death,
my war and my peace,
their war and their peace
stood together without conversing.
We know what it is like
to live like the dying
and die like the living
because it happens every damn day
in Istanbul and Karachi,
in those two stations where my train
will stop every five minutes of every damn day.
All of our glances will flow as a river of red blood
with yellow jasmine on its surface from the mountain
ranges of our ignorances
and desires were born
out of this standing together.
We can't sleep and neither can we be awake now,
our sanity mailed away to anywhere
without a return address.

But somehow there is comfort and pain
even as the angels and devils descend
to ask us for a slice of life and death –
without pride or arrogance
we submit ourselves to their questioning.
A tinge of resignation,
a hint of definition,
we forget each others names,
our lineage and oppressing parenthood,
knowing the incompleteness of our souls
with the completeness of our wants.

The day will pass. There is still the stillness
and quite the quietness
as our gentle anger flickers with gentle sainthood.
The pores on the charred and bright skins
telling us, telling us,
we will continue,
continue as the continuous breath of a mother
without the binds of fellowship or eternity.

Now we sit under the lone apricot tree
and look at each other
because for now that is the best we can do.

Unclothed

Soft nudging on the shoulder, a slight
wrestle of the arms, slender waters
sliding on a film of words, such
fine mist under the blanket of
closing looks. Some light, some fire,
for a man without his lyre.

Where art thou my insanity, my forest
of myth and lunacy? Hiding away
in camouflage within the splattering
mud of our ages, come, come, grant
me an iota of guidance. Some laughs, some freedom,
for a man who is asking someone to come.

Cracking the crusty knuckles; away you
demons of brevity, let go, let go, for some air
or some love; cracking the knees in preparation
for a long walk. No shouting,
only a whisper of supplication for flight. Some dance, some soul,
for a man, caught between worlds like a totem pole.

A request for contradiction

Unabashedly, walking after the soft calls
of humiliation – "learn from the experience
my man" – shrieking for a pride that
is not getting up, wanting for a tint of jealousy,
such are the armchair dreams
of a person bored with boredom.
Or perhaps they are visions of a child
who knows that even prophets
concealed their innocence.

Allow me to leave.

Tell me another story of virtue,
another tale of honesty and being true,
my memories fail me in their shame
as the demons laugh over my name,
such torture for is not fair,
specially when the contradictions hide when I am not there.

Allow me to leave.

The fall

I would very much like to fall in love
right now. As the leaves
fall away from their locks of
shackled poems, I would like
to fall like them into a mist
of brown, red and dying greens –
falling into the unknowns of
face and touch – falling towards
the chair to sit on after
a day of loving. Like the clouds
that look like the chest of a
well-exercised man, I would
want to become a prince of
simplicity, courage and laughter
(the ribs of my skeleton),
and then fall off a running
horse at the opportune moment
at the feet of flesh and
earth; fall into a tumble
of pain and dirt.

The living room late at night in Ankara

This summer I was in Ankara, mostly in the living room struggling to understand those hands of people I know that clasp the invisible blinking remote control and try to think for the television. My friends, think. Whether someone else is clicking away the buttons of your confused, voiced thoughts like a newscaster who is tired of his meaningless sordid job, think. Before your image is erased due to the failure of the persistence of vision, or because of electrical failure at the Center, think. Clasp those hands, let the remote blink itself to invisibility on its own and think.

Perhaps I spend too much time thinking. Twenty-one and enjoyer of late nights, neither t.v. nor my hands matter as I hear the husband beat the wife, or the children whisper about the funds for a new soccer ball, it is plausible that someone would be watching me and saying look at that boy sitting like that without thoughts. It's not important that people mistake me for a stranger in Ankara, let them seek solace in that, just like flies

that fly around to pick up an argument. But real flies are much clever, specially the ones that zig zag like drunk Roman emperors, or the ones that dart like a crazed soldier, they are the smart ones. Reveling in the freedom of the room, the room belonging more to them than to me they don't care if they are strangers to that room because they have been to other rooms. Adventurous bastards. Let the room belong to them, after all, we have forgotten how to fly even in our own minds.

Running into Turkey

Running away into the land, into the people
of middle class sorrow, of middle class muddles,
of spent anger and spent anarchists and spent leftists,
such is the tiresome loss of hope of running
like standing at the village graves by the highway
from which buses glide onwards leaving the
runner behind, the graves lonely on the verge of
collapsing into dry sand; it is not even Anatolian mud
since that has been sent to factories for packaging
to first world tourists. Such are the travails of the runner,
the Turk, the man, who has regained, never snatched
the wisdom of the donkeys.

Running, running from the ancient grasp of the river,
the women who washes clothes in the flowing silt of
unanswered prayers, who are so far away from the
concrete elevator fantasies that I am running towards.
I wish the women would see their sons running in shoes
splattered with green grass and black shit, just so that
I know they know I am not running in vain.
Where is the damn doctor who told me that rest
would calm the disease that everyone calls madness?
I am not mad. Runners are never mad, only tired.

Running, running circles under the still point of
that whirling sky and ocean meet with death, my
death from exhaustion – circles of living and laughter
from the whirling – no need to shout, I refuse to protest,
with arms raised, head wobbling, legs thumping on the
asphalt, on the plains, on the minds, there is no need
to blatantly make my point; let the feet bleed into
tomorrow and the rest will follow.

Angst

Trying to operate on a man with open chest wounds
cracking jokes to ease the tension of brutality
into a dilemma of intellect and faith
wondering out of the chamber where
a profession is no longer a profession
but more of a vehicle of salvation for
patient and doctors
conversations about the distance of
wives and children and home cooked food
above the din of old warplanes that
can't kill the first time
understanding that love is equal to
flirting with the nurses who are flirting back
everything is justified because justification
is a concept for the generals to chew
on when stuck in a limbo between
our voices and the silence of that white light
the tremblings of insecurity amidst the
sanity of the pranks albeit the insanity
of the meaningful music
words which hope to placate the scared
spared innocences dissolving into
the maturity of death of friendship
of poorly manufactured whiskey
thoughts of supermen and superwomen
raised among the dust from the helicopters blades
falling angels and dreams and bullets
they are all the same
when they hit the naked skin
such is the expectation of those who
raced gurneys on unpaved dirt tracks
or taunted proud but old enemy pilots
they recited psalms and poetry
a handful of quotations from their grandmothers
the effort to keep the emptiness of war away
huddling at the corner of a tent wanting
to go home now, now, now
asking to stop the madness
to break those infernal rules that apply to enemies
they break them everyday but alas they are not
in power although how sweet it is to see
the cruelty of living of blatant unfairness
deliverance into so much needed laughter
dripping like milk into a graceful movement of tears
perspectives of what it is
and not really what it should be
the t.v. show M*A*S*H
my angst.

Eyes

When I look at those eyes
my face melts into a forgotten
shadow, unable to assume
the responsibility of opening them anymore.
They look into me as if my body was
a tired grey piece of coal from which the
heat no longer made them sparkle
and glint among the company of rebels.

It just isn't the way the eyes look at me
but also the way they grow hands,
reaching out, and before trying to strangle me
pick up a blade from the counter and
slash themselves into little pieces
that will eventually drain down the sink.
Those eyes of Pakistan and Turkey numb my thinking
and I no longer can even count the
ways I want to die of loneliness,
all alone, without anybody
to hold up my face and cry into
my eyes.

There is no fear, no attempt
to retaliate but a general motion
of acceptance; the situation made
worse as the eyelids start to close.
The struggle is left only in the eyes
of those who had seen the yesteryears
and are now acknowledging the death
of a friend. There is no longer color,
doesn't need to be because there is no use
in reflecting eyes that are not looking.
All alone in a secret long acquired but
recently lost, the eyes sit together
staring right ahead into the mirror...
lovers that once loved and now under the
quite resignation of themselves
want to wither away into nothingness.
So who will save the eyes?
Don't look at me because I have
been blind since the death of my tongue.

Gotta think this one out

There was once a soldier who returned after a war
weary and tired, he sat beside the dinner table
and said to himself,
"I have just gotta think this out."

He took of his armor and laid it on the chair next to him,
then he removed his heart and carefully placed it on the table
proceeding to put his mind on his lap,
then he said to himself,
"I have just gotta think this out."

His parents walked into the room overjoyed to see their son,
only to cringe in disappointment
when they saw he had no medal
and their blood thought he had done wrong;
all that the soldier said was,
"I just gotta think this one out."

He turned to his parents and recounted his saga of kills,
told them of his best friend that was now dead,
that only best friend that died behind his back,
so that his parents could only silently listen
in their refuge of the philosophy of war,
and all the soldier really said was,
"I just gotta think this one out."

He didn't cry, he didn't wail, neither did he protest,
nor did he confuse himself with excuse;
he said he had died and lived on the earth under the moon
spread in pieces under the bramble bush
not alone but all alone
and really all he ever said was,
"I just have gotta think this one out."

His parents cried and tried to understand like two prophets
but they were only his parents, not his enemies
so they left him with his armor, heart and mind
saying that time will heal;
the son never kissed them, neither did the soldier hug them
but simply said to himself,
"I just gotta think this one out."

He sat there and played with his hands, till the sun came up and down,
leaving his face unshaven and rough like the Baluchi mountains,
juggling answers with questions and questions without answers
thinking how blue the Mediterranean was;
all this in head
in the midst of doubt and pain
and all he ever said to himself was,
"I just gotta think this one out."

This story does not end
because imagination does not have limits.
And how can I know where does the
mountain end and the sea begin
when only a minute ago I said to myself,

"I just gotta think this one out."

The smile, circa 1979

The guy was dead, it was the war of hollow men
but he still had a smile on his face.
That is strange, my head said to my hands,
is he smiling at me or at the
things I can't even see, hear or feel.
I just stood above him
the cars and the people whizzing by;
the smile wasn't all that beautiful
to bend ones knees to,
maybe therefore the smile felt
like hurling a vulgarity from a long distance.
The teeth did not show and
the lips did not curl up like the pages
of a cheap novel
and the smile did not seem to
offend a voice that was pale,
tired and very sad.
I didn't get much out from that smile
specially when there was so
much false laughter and cheering around...
and the guy was dead.

I wish I had a joke or a witty remark
to make the smile even brighter
but nothing came to my mind
as if I was like an empty bore
of an artillery canon.

I walked away after I realized
that I would never get to ask
the reason or meaning of that smile.
I did not smile for a long time
but nobody else in Turkey understood that.

Mine of coal and hearts

Yusuf, cries over the coffin of his father as everyone in the village looks on. For the first time, is whiter than the mines in which he choked, and the alarms didn't go off for him. The Turkish flag draped over the wooden capsule of journey into another mine, is like a red banner of blood, but nobody today will say anything; the blood is silent, choked by the mines. In the middle of Zonguldak, there is this boy who knows that there will be other flags and one will be reserved for him because he has no choice, there is no other choice. By virtue of birth the mines are his, the coal his lover that he has to understand, live with and choke in. The silent ones below will become coal that will burn for the warmth of others one day. There is no other choice. Yusuf hugs the coffin and cries his manhood away. Behind him, far away I stand waiting for the elevator to go down into darkness and choice.

Knocking on Senel's door

I see her smoking a cigarette, it is past one o'clock in the morning and sitting on the edge of the bed the glow is a voiceless call in the middle of heaven, she sits without moving. She is thinking to herself how her children are going to grow and that she is not willing to me weak in front of her husband anymore. The hands cultured by the sink and clothes patiently, quietly cut an arc in the air with the breath of old angels, the air slowly dancing away from her lungs. I don't know her, I am too young. Looking at a woman who is watching her daughter swing silently in the hammock strung between rebellion and disobedience, I wonder if she is one of the old fallen angels who are not sorry for their fate. She knows what I am thinking. She always does and tells me to go to sleep, there is school in the morning.

I see her death in my dream, but I know she is alive. She hides her pain so well, her silence raining on her face which she doesn't seem to mind. All her smiles befriend the wrinkles dissolving into graceful rivulets. The eyes look away when the children want to go and conquer the world, because she conquered it and we are all looking at the price we paid: heaviness of the heart of knowing things could have been different. The graying hair laughs at those who are left behind, the knees complaining only when she reads a book cross-legged without getting up for a long time. Her back is locked as if it was made up of a series of intertwining broken fingers, fingers that belong to the people she told not to come to her burial. She will not cry, except for and in front of her son, a friend without demand or direction. That is how I know she is alive. Even as she is dying within and without my dream she is alive because I have seen time, history and patience stroke her brow like faithful lovers.

She let go so easily of me in the morning. She had understood the dream, the passage of evening and night, everything. Without question she let go of me, imparting only a few words of caution, making toast sandwich with cheese & jelly. All those years it was the same sandwich until the end when she finally realized like myself that cheese & jelly sandwiches were a part of our lives that we would be lucky to relive, when I came back. I have yet to dance with her in a public place, show her and everybody else that I have learned to step among the quietness of her pride and my cries for sight to catch her faults and make them mine. The music will implode like soap bubbles in her hands, and she will allow herself the luxury of laughter. A moment of holding onto me, the past and future, and all those never to be written things of the present, and then she will let go watching me fall and get up in fright with revelation.

We talk little as the sun trudges, the world bellowing like an aching donkey. Sitting across each other, the cigarette in her hand, newspaper on her soiled sweaty lap, we are looking at each other admitting how we will always belong to a man now dead, and to a woman younger than us; they have yet to know how they belong to us too. She bleeds into the hot summer sky and I roll back into the ocean, all this with the wash still flapping in the balcony, the rice still simmering and the dust about to settle on the furniture. The house is full of noises, of happenings, of our lives that we are leaving behind and dragging with at the same time. Struggling to be content, we might succeed or fail, the finishing day will tell. All she knows is that there is no longer a door for me to knock on from today onwards.

Comedy of repetitions

You look away from the paper in front of you; what you want to write nobody will understand. There are rivers in my eyes, your hands will want to inscribe that onto the same piece of paper that you looked away from. And when it is done your soul will be carried to the people in the supermarket. They wouldn't even care. So you shadow box with your childhood friends, the two that you met yesterday after four and a half years. They are still the same guys who are pushing into the future without carrying the luggage of the past; of those wonder years at Karachi Grammar School. A world of difference and yet you & them are born of the same pain, only your mother is still giving birth to you. Then you remind yourself that you will never be a Jesus or Mohammed, and neither will your life make complete sense to you. There really is nothing to inscribe since you are floating away without an anchor into the outstretched arms of the rabble; the rabble that will never believe in superman, you. Let go of the choice, of the paper, the desire to etch yourself into permanence. What the hell! Like a slogan written in blood on a torn banner the rabble will breathe your name when mothers give birth, and inhale your pain when fathers bury the dead. The cycle will go ad infinitum. You will never see the people in the supermarket start to care, or the readers understand you, or the shadows disappear, or your two friends grab onto those wonder years for dear life; never. What you will see is yourself starting not to look away, smiling in peace and collapsing in surrender to the singing of the rabble.

In search of Orhan Veli and a place to sit

There is an insistence of not to go on,
to stay and remove the sand
from the shoes,
drink some tea watching the water and Istanbul as I
turn on the radio,
take a handful of cherries
and place a small book face down
on a thankful chest
and then climb a mountain
created from years of going on –
such is the insistence

to sit, and breathe, and feel
my buttocks settle into the earth,
letting the arms snugly rest
on desires of throwing a stone
at my childhood. The clouds
smeared on the top of my head
like spilt milk, the trees waving
down angels to take note of me
for their afternoon classes as
the smell of ancient prayers
from the grandfathers and grandmothers
from the villages below make
me forget the city, the people,
such is the insistence

to look for the sake of looking,
to sigh and inhale time
reconcile the sorrow of my
father, of knowing my destiny
allowing my hair to do whatever
it wants to do. Such is the insistence
to think about my children
and to laugh at what I have
written and said, waiting

for Orhan to come, to tell
me that we are friends from
eternity, that there is goodness in all of us
and that we have
finally found a place to sit.

No longer Jesus

The nails that have gone
through your hands no longer
hurt. Arms are numb, the
shoulders snapped a couple of
minutes ago. But the feet,
oh! the feet, how they bleed.
Like a cross on a dead woman's
chest in the middle of a street
in Beirut you are a symbol
of nobody's salvation.
You are no Jesus, no prophet
of God. Nailed to a tree, your
head drooping like a sunflower
on those playgrounds of Van Gogh
you are alone in pretense.
The feet still bleed because you
still are dying as time passes
you by. It will always be
like this; this is your life.
You can dream all you
want, whatever you want,
nothing is going to change.
The people nailed you to the
tree because no other martyrs
were left. You are the last
martyr. After you, who knows.
All I know is, for some reason
you took my place on the tree
and I am no longer Jesus.

songs for the fools of zen by the naked matador

love, love, and desire

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
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 Jesuses 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 cages – 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 choking, 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.

tell me my 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,
we 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, darkneses and evils are barking at our 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 dirt, 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 have 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 for 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.

Run

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 good-byes

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

Hawkesbay Beach

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

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.

My Gaziantep, my 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 olives and drinking sour cherry juice.

M.L.K.

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.

That last drop of water

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

Distance, darkness, darkness, distance

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.

Slaves of 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 pirouette 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 shut up,
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 good-byes
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.

Harmonica

I palm my harmonica
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

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 paeon, 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

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 damp 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 matter 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 disenchanting, the yuppie, the
tired and spent housewife, the hungry
and soulless artist, can buy one.
At the checkout line, the people will daydream
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 smelting 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 that
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

for Philip Levine

"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 Ms. Vaughn, Ms. Holliday and Ms. 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 langoring 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 blowtorch
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, choking 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 ashtray
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 Woolf 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.

